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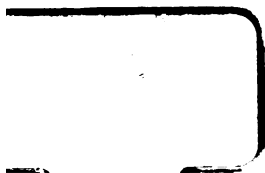
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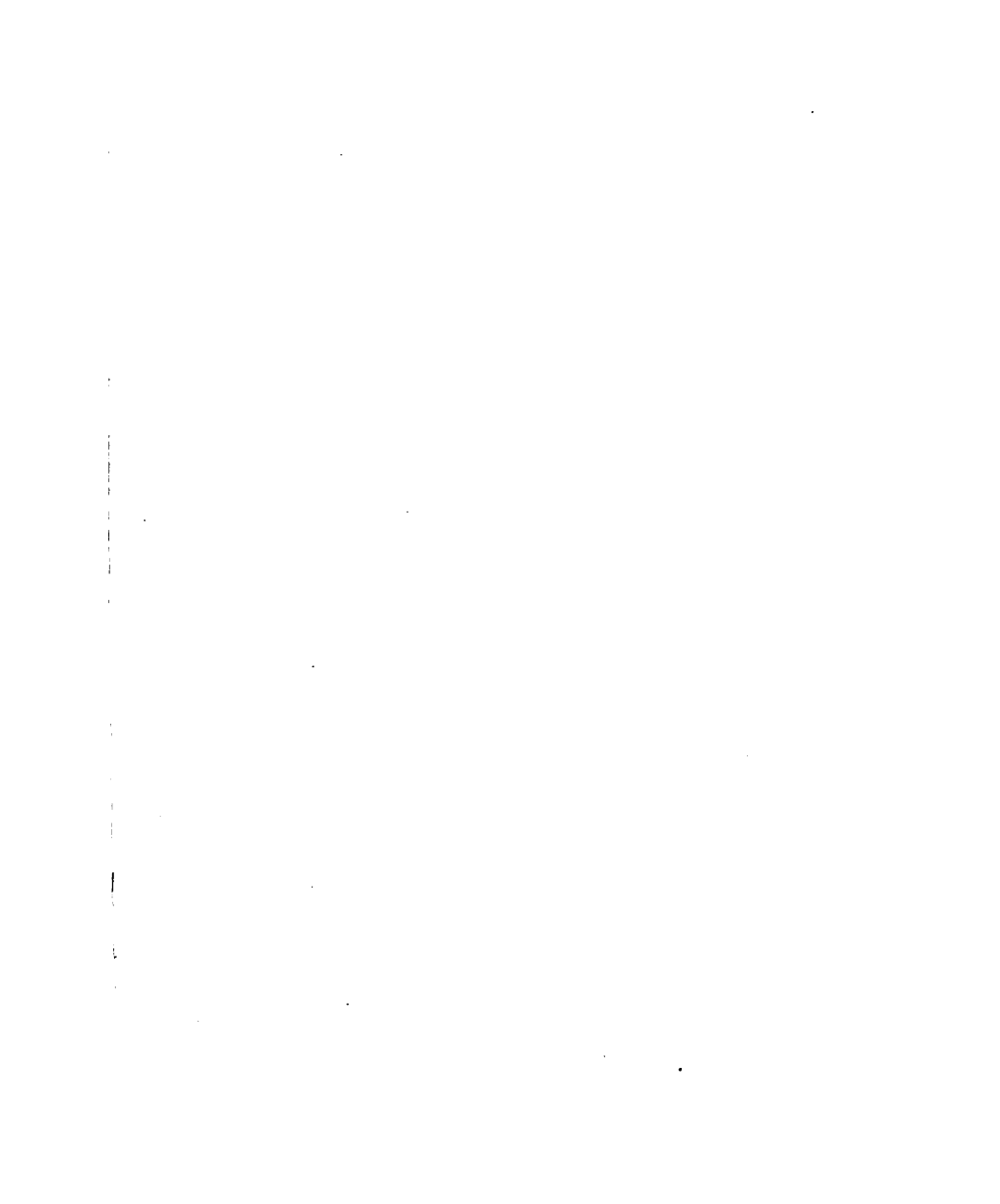


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A LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER.

BY  
ELSA D'ESTERRE-KEELING.

IN ONE VOLUME.



**TAUCHENITZ EDITION.**

**By the same Author,**

**THREE SISTERS . . . . . 1 vol.**

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F

A  
LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER

BEING THE  
REVELATIONS OF AN INFANT IN ARMS  
AN ABSURDITY  
TOGETHER WITH  
TWO COMIC PLAYS.

BY  
ELSA D'ESTERRE-KEELING,  
AUTHOR OF "THREE SISTERS," ETC.

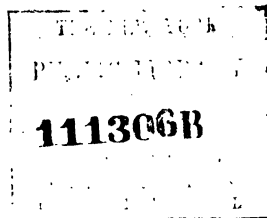
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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1886.

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C



A LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER  
DEDICATED WITH PERMISSION  
TO  
GEHEIMERATH FELIX DAHN  
THE POET AND HISTORIAN.

---

“Are there Gods?”—This question forms the subject of one of your finest works, dear German thinker. Are there Gods?—

“—— ——— we cannot know;  
*For knowledge is of things we see.*”

Who then will deny that there are Babies?—And what of that?—

Why, daring though it seem of the Irishwoman who writes of Babies to lay her work at the feet of the German who writes of Gods—she does so.



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**A LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER.**





## PART I.

### *Preliminary Speechifying, the Infant's Birthday, and a pretty little Attention.*

#### I.

#### PRELIMINARY SPEECHIFYING.

I SUPPOSE no one will deny that never is a man's face so calmly contemplative as in the first year of his existence; that at no time later do you observe the steady gaze which is characteristic of the man a week old. That from these two facts there is but one conclusion to be drawn, namely, that during the first year of his life a man thinks more than during all the rest of his life put together—I suppose need not be said. That no man has ever yet given to the world a minute description of what he *did* think and experience during this period of his life, can only be explained by the fact that people who give to the world descriptions of their own lives are peculiarly modest, and that the insertion of their

thoughts and experiences during this most interesting period of their lives, would, in the case of men of genius, such as autobiographers generally are, enormously swell the autobiography.

Not that it can be said no man of genius has ever yet given a glimpse of himself as babe. Pope, in a burst of confidence, tells us he lisped in numbers,—“The numbers came,” he adds laconically; but that is all.

I for my part mean to be less reticent. To begin with, I am not a man of genius; I did not lisp in numbers; but as an infant in arms I well remember how thoughts crowded upon me, and it is these which in this work I mean to describe.

With reference to thought, here I pause to ask, “What *is* thought?” and in default of a reply from the ceiling, look up the letter “T” in my dictionary. Sure enough, here it is, under heading THO:—“*Thought*,—the act of thinking.” What I like about dictionary definitions is, that if they do not make one any wiser, they always leave one as wise as one was before; none of that high-flown stuff in them of which you get so much elsewhere, and which, like the sermon the Scotchman liked, “joombles the joodgement, and confoonds the sense.”

*Thought*, the act of thinking. Truly, some may say, this is “*ower* plain and simple,” (so, *entre nous*,

say I); still there is no denying that it does not "confoond" the sense. Nay, the longer I look at the definition, the more it pleases me, and the more do I become convinced that, excepting in one of my rare happy moments, I could not outdo it in terseness and what Clarendon Press annotators love to call a delicate vein of humour.

Having come to which conclusion, I will proceed, as best I can, to describe the thoughts of my infancy. Like all infants whom I have ever met, I was given to profound cogitation. At two weeks of age I would lie for hours lost in contemplation of the wall-paper of my nursery, notwithstanding which circumstance, and this strikes me as peculiar, I do not now recollect what it was like. I have built up a theory on that; namely, that if you wish to lose all recollection of a thing, you should look at it with all your might for a period varying from two to six hours consecutively. I believe the same plan would answer applied to persons.

I think I was never more struck than on catching sight of my own face in a mirror one day—I was some months old at the time—and observing how very strongly the expression of stern thoughtfulness marked it. It really was a very odd feeling, my own physiognomy seeming to say to me, "Aye, indeed, my boy, life is no joke, whatever grown-ups

may think, and it's hard to keep up one's pecker with the teething business coming on."

A circumstance which I have never been quite able to explain to myself is that, while thus eminently pensive, I cared little for books and still less for newspapers, politics being as indifferent to me as they were to him who gave to the world the drama *Faust*.

I lay and thought, and it is my firm conviction that I found the "Philosophers' Stone," which to this day I look for under every baby's cradle; and I believe that, if only a few others would join me in so doing, between us we some day might find it.

What a thing for the British Museum!

A circumstance which I have equal difficulty in understanding, and to which I allude with some pain, is that while thus in so many respects a true philosopher, my diary, kept during my first year (the writing, I believe, would be illegible to anybody but myself, being something more primitive than pot-hooks) is one continuous repetition of the following extraordinary week's record.

Monday.—Sleep. Bottle.

Tuesday.—Dull sort of day. Bottle.

Wednesday.—Took an airing. Bottle.

Thursday.—In excellent spirits. Bottle.

Friday.—Fell out of bed. Bottle.

Saturday.—Awfully seedy. Bottle.

I do not really think I was ever more scandalized than on coming across the above among my papers. I have often noted with pleasure how much my character seems to improve from day to day, but never was it so evidently brought before me that I must indeed at one time have been a being very different from the respectable member of society which I now am. There is in this record a *bonhomie* and heartbreaking insensibility to shame which simply take my breath away. That I, of all men, with my present delicate sense of right and wrong, wearing too, as I have done for some time past, a fillet of ultramarine silk depending from my button-hole,—that I, Wriggley, junior, of the well-known firm of Wriggley, Wriggley, and Wriggley, should, as an infant not a month old, have been able to pen such a diary, with its sickening man-about-town air, is to me inconceivable. I will only add that I have lost all faith in innocent babes. Well was it said by the Latins: *Ne fronti crede*. Your innocent babe is a humbug.

Meanwhile, I will not dwell on this circumstance; but will add a few words to the reader on the aim of this work, which is, in giving some account of the incidents which in my earliest babyhood caused me to form for life my views on men and manners,

to abolish the widely-prevailing notion that an infant does not observe and mentally comment on what takes place around it. Whilst, on the one hand, proud, I confess, of doing what no one has done before me; on the other hand, I will not deny that I am nervous to bashfulness at being the first babe that has, so to speak, stepped before the public. Not that I am at the present moment a babe, being in my forty-first year (though no one would believe it from my appearance), but in these pages I shall only figure as I recollect myself exactly forty years ago, at which time I have my mother's authority for saying that I closely resembled the cherubs of the immortal Raphael.

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## II.

## MY BIRTHDAY.

It has been my experience that a man is born only once, and has only one birthday. The annual commemoration of it that takes place later, is simply pitiful in comparison with the real day. You *are* a person of importance then. My recollection is of having the whole household round me, elbowing each other for a glimpse of me. Well, call it overweening vanity, but I don't know of anything that a man enjoys more than this. As for me, I confess on that day I felt in a glorious and triumphant state the like of which I have never since known. It may sound bumptious, but I seemed to myself like the king who allows the cats to look at him.

Now do people ever elbow each other to get a glimpse of you on your other so-called birthdays? It has not been my experience, though I have had what people call birthdays since the day on which I was born. I shall never forget the first of these. Hearing its approach spoken of, I had formed an idea that there would be much the same kind of



festivity as on what I have since made up my mind to designate as my one and only birthday. I even pictured the doctor and clergyman calling; of course, it was foolish, but who in this world is wise? My expectations were not realized in the least. As if in mocking memory of the first festive day, my father presented me with—a rattle.

Never was I more disgusted in my life. I looked at him, and then gave one long protracted HOWL.

“Lay him face downwards,” said some one who had just entered the room.

This was the invariable order called forth by my evincing anguish of whatsoever kind. I will not descant on what must strike every one in it; namely, the heartless wording. I will only remark that I believe it to be speeches of this and a similar kind, overheard in moments of speechless anguish, that gall the milk of human kindness in many a babe.

And now to the description of my one and only birthday. How the tide of recollection comes flowing back! It seems to me as if it were only yesterday.

What I especially liked about this day was the mixture on it of solemnity and jollification: this, indeed, is what your true-born Briton always likes. While my advent was hailed on the one hand with

general rapture and delight, on the other hand it was not treated in a light manner (that would have displeased me), as if the arrival of babies of my dress and appearance—I take this to be a mere idiom; if it comes to cavilling, of course the dress came later—was an event to be regarded in a flip-pant manner.

Dear me, how the scene comes back! (say what you will, there is, after all, nothing like memory). There was my mother laughing and crying in 'a breath, and my father—well, of course, if I had not seen it with my own eyes I should never have believed it—he was doing his best to take it all in a calm manner, but kept forgetting himself and making little jubilant hops about the room. Even now the recollection of this fills me with amusement, and I am obliged to put down my pen to have a good laugh. It was while executing one of these little hops (or frisks, as one might call them) that my father came into direct collision with the old doctor; Grimkey was his name.

What a rebound on either side it was! Grimkey was a Brobdignagian figure; my father, with all respectfulness be it said, was Lilliputian. Perhaps that is why old Grimkey had not noticed him before. Anyway, the doctor was an oddity, as most old doctors are, and as all doctors, old and young,

ought to be, and would be if they knew how much oddity is admired in the medical profession. Positively glaring at my father, he exclaimed,—

“Who the (stopping himself) are you?”

*Pater meus* was not given to oratory in a general way, but here he rose to the occasion. With a superb sweep of his arm, ending in elevated oblique, he said,—

“I, doctor? I am the—father.”

Talk of the dignity of royalty! I have said that my father was not a colossal figure; but as he said these words, such was the majesty of his eye, his arm, in a word his entire form, that I will venture to say, it would not be outdone in their moments of supremest dignity by our most gracious sovereign-lady Queen Victoria, Albert Edward Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, and all the royal family.

*“I, doctor? I am the—father.”*

“Egad, are you?” said old Grimkey, laughing, and wringing him by the hand. “Well, I’ll be blest if there’s any standing the pride of fathers!”

Whereupon he beckoned my father away, and there was whispering outside the door, and then my father returned alone, looking a little troubled, albeit wondrous happy, and kissed my mother and called

her his dear wife, and then they took me between them and—bless me, what a happy family-party we were!

That is what I call a birthday. I have known nothing like it since.

---

## III.

## THE FAMILY NAME.

It may be as well before giving the further history of my infancy, to repeat that our family name is Wriggley. There are people who do not consider the name euphonious—*de gustibus non est disputandum*—excepting birds in their little nests, very few living things agree. We who bear the name, that is to say, my father, my mother, and myself, not to mention a host of uncles, aunts, and cousins, male and female (we hail a Wriggley wherever we meet him as our relative), consider it peculiarly pleasing to the ear.

At the time of my appearing on the scene of life, my father (at present head of the already mentioned well-known firm of Wriggley, Wriggley, and Wriggley) was doing business in what is generally termed a "small way;" but as this is a fact on which we never dwell out of the family circle, I will not dwell on it here.

The Christian name of my father was Herbert. By my mother, who was a Londoner, and spoke the

Queen's English as spoken by the large majority of her majesty's loving subjects in that capital, he was called—and this strikes me as a pretty elision of the aspirate and the trill—"Erbet."

My mother's Christian name was Mary; but my father called her Molly, making use of one of the many improvements on that name. There were, of course, moments when, as in the best-regulated households, the conjugal love between my parents underwent a temporary cooling; this resulting in scenes which, probably from their entering into every home-drama, are called after the simplest species of crockery. On these occasions it was my parents' custom to call each other, not "Erbet" and "Molly," but "Sir" and "Madam," or "Mr. Wiggley" and "Mrs. Wiggley." After a dialogue conducted on this dignified footing, my mother usually retired to her room and shed copious tears, while my father would go to business looking unutterably miserable. Later on they would make up again, and call each other Erbet and Molly as before. As an infant in arms I was a constant witness of scenes like this. Later on my parents would not for the world have disputed on any subject before me, because, as every one knows, the Wiggleys are an eminently respectable family, and as my mother used to say,—

"If you wish to be coarse to your wife, Erbet" (she always called it his being "coarse," when he argued on any subject, no matter how mildly); "If you wish to be coarse to *me*, Mr. Wiggley, have the kindness to send the children out of the room."

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## IV.

## A PRETTY LITTLE ATTENTION.

EVERY ONE knows what is generally meant by a pretty little attention.

You have fowl. Uncle Tom has a dainty tooth. You give him a bit of the breast. (A pretty little attention.)

You have children. Aunt Sue detests children. You whip them all round, and put them to bed. (A pretty little attention.)

There are dozens of others as pretty. By these dainty things society is upheld. Meanwhile, if I am a little sore on the subject, it is because, with a *pretty little attention* is associated an unhappy circumstance in my life.

I was some three or four days old. Dr. Grimkey had just departed after his morning call, whereupon we, that is to say, myself, my father and mother, had formed into one of those pretty family groups which I delight in depicting:—I, the cherub, in the middle, clasping my father's finger with my



dear little hand, while my mother was telling me how this little pig went to market, and this little pig stayed at home, raising one of my dear little toes at the mention of each new little pig. Then, when she had told me how the last little pig cried "wee-wee" all the way home, and when she and my father between them had almost broken my tympanum by crying "wee-wee" in imitation of said little pig, one at each of my ears, they began the conversation between themselves which I herewith chronicle:—

"Erbet, dear," said my mother, "should you mind? Of course I don't want to hurt you, Erbet."

Here she stopped, not that she was out of breath, or that anything had gone before which might aid my father in understanding her, but because it was a habit of my dear mother's to content herself with thinking the ends of her sentences, or *vice versa*. Sometimes she would think the beginning, and say the end. Whichever plan she adopted my father looked equally mystified, the truth being that it takes more brain-power, or brain-power of a subtler kind than that given to the male portion of humanity, to understand this mode of speech.

"Would you mind, Moll, dear," said my father,

leaning forward, with his quiet smile, "putting the thing more plainly?"

The slowness of men is marvellous to women. My mother looked at him with a pity beautiful to behold—the pity which woman, the last, most perfect of created beings, has ever had for the being last but one. Then, by way of full explanation, speaking slowly, so as not to confuse his poor brain, she said, as she laid her frail white hand on his, and raised to his those wonderful eyes of hers,—

"I think, you know, Erbet, it would be a pretty little attention."

"Yes, dear, certainly," said my father, as if suddenly coming to himself, "and now try to go to sleep."

That he knew no more than the man in the moon what she meant was evident to me. Possibly he had been suddenly struck by the frailness of the hand laid on his, perhaps he had noticed the dark rims beneath her eyes. Be that as it may, he smoothed the clothes over her, and darkened the room, and then sat watching her, with that look in his face that the infant in arms never understood, such a wonderful mixture was it of happiness and trouble.

She was smiling. So was he. But she was sleeping and he was awake.

"Whatever she meant," he muttered, "I have notified my agreement; with shut eyes have signed the contract. Molly, you practise sorcery. Stay, she is sleeping. How pale she looks!"

He bent over her; and the infant saw no more. . . .

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## V.

## MY FATHER.

"DR. GRIMKEY, ma'am."

"Show him in."

This was the next morning.

Now when this announcement was made, my father had me on his lap, kissing me and calling me his boysy-poysy.

I see no sense in your smiling, superior mortal, who are reading this. I repeat, my father was indulging in a pretty little display of paternal affection, when in at the door peeped Nancy, announcing Dr. Grimkey. Straightway my father hustled me into my cradle, as if the chief thing in life were expedition, and decorum a matter of no consequence whatever. He then retired to the furthest end of the room, and, in reply to the mild gaze of inquiry which I ventured to direct to him on the score of this conduct, favoured me with a look which said as plain as words,—

"The fact is, my good boy, I wish to appear not

to know you. Oblige me by seeming to regard me as a stranger."

Whereupon he began walking up and down the room in a pompous manner, with his hands folded behind him, and an expression as though his thoughts were running on stock exchange, and had never run on anything else since he was born.

I must say it is not pleasant to be almost smothered with caresses one moment, to be dropped, like a poor relation, the next. Yet, whilst feeling both grief and indignation as regards myself, I remember I had sufficient sense of the comical to be intensely amused at the appearance presented by my esteemed father.

In a word, I burst out laughing.

"Good gracious!" said my mother, "he's laughing! The baby is laughing, Erbet!"

"'Pon my life, so he is!" said my father, all his dignity gone in a moment. "He's laughing, Moll!"

You would have thought that neither of them had ever before heard the peculiar noise which sudden merriment excites, and always did excite, in the human subject all the world over, with the exception, of course, of the ancient Egyptians, and the monks of La Trappe, who knew that all is

vanity under the sun, and smote their breasts when visited by a merry thought.

"He's laughing; ha! ha! ha!" said my mother, and buried her face in the bed-clothes, not to succumb to her mirth.

"He's laughing; ho! ho! ho!" echoed my father, and danced a species of hornpipe in sheer excess of merriment.

Then they looked at each other, as much as to say,—

"Well, we *have* produced a wonder; a baby that laughs!" and then the three of us fell to laughing again, my mother under the bed-clothes, my father sitting beside her, and I in my cradle; a trio of laughter, bass, treble, and my little note, which was neither. Such a hubbub I suppose was never heard. In the midst of it enter—Dr. Grimkey.

Of course my father, man-like, tried to carry it off. Composing his features into parchment-like stiffness, he said, with a wave of his hand in the direction of my mother and me, who were looking at each other and laughing with all our might, not one whit abashed, though all the medical men in London should be standing in the doorway,—

"Mother and child, doctor! Mother and child!"

This in a tone of superb indulgence, as much as to say,—

"Under these circumstances a little folly may be excused. As for me, my connection with madam and her son is so remote that you will understand I have nothing to do with this sort of thing."

Now I am glad to relate that Dr. Grimkey was as much amused as myself at this would-seem lofty indifference. In fact, I caught his eye, and there was a decided twinkle in it, a twinkle so expressive of the very feelings which I was experiencing, that I hastened to respond to it by closing my left orb with that significant cast which says,—

"We understand."

To my horror—"Hang me," fairly shouted the old doctor, "if the little beggar isn't winking!"

This was more than I had bargained for, and I hastened to resume my most infantile expression.

"Stay a minute, doctor," said my mother, as he took up his hat to go.

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## VI.

## MY MOTHER.

THE doctor stayed, and my mother turned to my father with that look which your wife gives you when she wants you to be "nice," that is, to throw off as far as in you lies, that unfortunate boorishness which is part of your nature as man, and which she, and your mother, and sister—poor things—are all of them always trying to tone down.

"I have a word to say to you, doctor," said my mother. As she spoke, she beckoned my father to her side, to have him as much as possible under her eye.

"You have been so very kind, doctor." This with a little quiver in her voice which was quite genuine, for the old doctor had been kind past the power of repaying in guinea fees, 'had he desired any such from my mother.

Grimkey coughed; not that he had a cough, but because he plainly did not know anything to say. My father coughed, I presume for the same reason;



and if there had been any other men present they would doubtless also have coughed, because men always cough when you play on their heart-strings.

My mother proceeded, "I, that is, Erbet and I, doctor, were thinking; weren't we, Erbet?"

"Yes," said my father, looking rather in the moon. Taking the word "thinking" in its wide acceptation, as the revolving of ideas in the mind, I suppose he told himself that he had, at various periods of his life, occupied himself with so doing. It was a Jesuitical line of argument; for he must have well known that his wife meant thinking of a definite kind on a definite subject, though on what no man could guess from the fragmentary nature of her remark.

Meanwhile my mother, like the true woman that she was, was satisfied with the answer in the affirmative. Looking from him to the doctor, from the doctor to me, and from me back to my father, she said,—

"And we were saying, doctor—that is, Erbet and I were saying; weren't we, Erbet?"

"Yes," said my father, with stolid resignation. In for a penny, in for a pound. My mother gave him a radiant smile, which said, "There's a dear man. How he catches my meaning."

But he didn't; which is what I "with my little eye" plainly saw. And so did old Grimkey, unless I mistake the play of the crows' feet.

Not but my father was flattered at her thinking he did. The highest compliment a woman ever pays a man is to credit him with understanding herself. He even (oh, father mine!) sat down with a smile of superlative knowingness; and, with what I cannot but consider a hypocritical wave in the direction of the doctor, whose crows' feet were coming into freer and freer play, said,—

"I—I don't think, Moll, that—*Dr. Grimkey*—quite understands you."

Whereupon my mother continued, just giving his (my father's) hand a tender squeeze, because it was so sweet to her to think that he, "Erbet," knew her unuttered thoughts:—

"We thought, doctor, we should like to call baby by your name. What is it? You sign yourself with an 'N.'"

My father looked surprised, but not displeased. As for the old doctor, never, I think, did I see such a pleased grin as that which lit up his features. His face was at all times jovial, but when contracted in the display of pleased emotion, it was a sight to make you cheerful over a cold-meat dinner.

I see him still, his moustache slowly rising and extending in breadth, his eyes almost shut, his hands clasped on his stick, his figure inclined, the very embodiment of old-world gracefulness and courtesy.

And this his answer,—

“You honour me, madam, indeed you do. I never had a child named after me before. Yes, I sign myself with an N. My name is Nobs.”

Many long faces as I have seen in my time, I do not think I ever saw a face so preternaturally long as my father’s at this reply. As for my mother there was, of course, no perceptible change on her countenance, but I thought the cheerfulness in her voice was just a little strained, as she said,—

“Nobs? Indeed! Quite an uncommon name, is it not, Erbet?”

“*Quite* uncommon!” almost roared my father.

“Don’t, dear!” whispered my mother. “You *can* be so nice when you like, Erbet.”

This is what my mother always told my father when he was not nice.

At the same time the doctor held out his hand to wish them both good morning. “So the child’s to be called after me. Well, it’s not a bad name to my way of thinking. Good-bye, Nobs!” and he actually gave me the name already.

“Now, Molly,” said my father, on his return in

full war-paint from seeing the old gentleman out of the house, "just tell me what you meant by this?"

"I thought, Erbet, it would be a pretty little attention."

My father was not a violent man, and like many other men who in business are but in "a small way," with his wife was a gentleman. Still, I believe that on this occasion I heard him say under his breath,—

"Hang pretty little attentions!"

As for my mother, she either did not hear him say so, or thought it as well to pretend she did not.

"Did you know what his name was, Molly?" said my father in a muffled voice.

"How should I?" exclaimed my mother. "I only knew that he signed himself with an N. The chances were ten to one that it would be a good name."

"The chances were ten to one that it would be Nebuchadnezzar," replied my father, with a return of wrath. "There's a prophet too begins with an N."

"Hush, dear," said my mother, to whom this was blasphemy. "You're thinking of Nehemiah. It was not likely Dr. Grimkey would be called Nehemiah."

Thus it was that I came to be called Nobs. I will not dwell on the humiliation which I have over and over again felt at the consciousness of bearing such a name. I can only say, like the doctor, but I say it with a deeper meaning, "*I sign myself with an N.*"

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## PART II.

*The Infant puffed up, and the Infant's Lady  
Cousin.*

## I.

## THE INFANT IN ARMS PUFFED UP.

ONE of the earliest ideas which I recollect having was that I was the most perfect specimen of my kind extant. In justification of myself, I will say that this was an idea in a manner forced upon me. My mother would gaze on me by the hour in a kind of ecstasy at my surpassing loveliness. Nurse (how well I remember her, honest Bet! She stayed till I was twelve months old) would stand at the foot of my cradle, perfectly entranced, and able only to ejaculate at intervals, and in an almost smothered voice,—“Aint he a beauty? The himage of his father!”

Now, this pleased my father more than anything. Indeed it was the funniest thing in life to see the latter putting on, what I hope I shall not be deemed disrespectful for calling *the baby-look*, a sort of would-

be artless smile, while he would open his eyes in a childlike manner, and would say,—

“Well, yes, Molly, I think there *is* a likeness.”

“Why, *of course*, Erbet,” my mother would say; and then she and my father would kiss each other, and honest Bet would snigger, because it put her in mind of Mr. and Mrs. Battiscombe, who had done “percisely” the same thing, as indeed had all the gen’l men and ladies at whose houses she had been in attendance.

And then honest Bet and my dear mother and father would all of them begin analyzing my various beauties, as if I were a block or a picture, instead of a living baby, “with my little eye” like the fly in the song, and my little ear, like babies the wide world over.

“The sweet cherry-mouth!” my mother would say. Of course I at once began spelling stewed prunes the better to show it off. *Very* human and quite pardonable.

“The dear little hands!” my father would add. At once I began to drum on the counterpane—shakes, octaves, runs; anything to show off the dear little hands. *Very* pardonable and quite human.

“And the feet, oh, the darling pretties!” would ejaculate honest Bet, regardless of idiomatic English.

Well, to this day, if I am vain of anything

(which, by the way, I hope you have not noticed is what people usually say when there are few things of which they are not vain) it is of my feet. Needless to say, at this remark of honest Bet's, I began such a stampede that to any one but to blind parents it would have betrayed the demoralizing effect of said praise on the young idea.

That it had this effect I grieve to say. As I remember myself at two months old, I was as vain a young cub as ever wore long clothes. Most men content themselves with thinking what a speaking head they have, or what a fine figure, or what a splendid leg. Well, absurd as it may sound, I, Nobbs Wiggley, the infant in arms, believed that in my person were united these three charms. I became perfectly infatuated on the subject of my own beauty, and, so hard is it ever to throw off a conviction once strongly held, that I sometimes to this day find myself thinking what an extremely handsome fellow I am. Nay, I have moments of perfect rapture when I know I go about twirling my moustache and whisking my cane in a simply ludicrous manner, just as though honest Bet were still before me, crying,—“Ain't he a beauty! The *himage* of his fater.”

When will parents learn to be wise and not overpraise the infant?



With reference to nurses, I may say that an event which took place early in my career made me rather sceptical concerning their praise. It was as follows:—

One day, after standing for some time as it were spell-bound beside my cradle, quoth Bet (and very pleased I was with the remark):—

“Well’m, I allers said as our baby was a beauty, but not till I see Mrs. Pompenny’s baby, wich is said to be soo-pub, did I know what ’orrors other folks’ babies was.”

My dear mother smiled, as she replied, (I could not help thinking very charitably,—)

“Hush, nurse, we mustn’t be vain” (I believe a baby is always considered as belonging three parts to the nurse, and the fourth fraction to its mother; so that it was nice of Bet to say “our baby,” and perhaps a little presumptuous in my mother to say “*we* mustn’t be vain”); “to be sure, poor Mrs. Pompenny’s baby is—well, well, it’s no affair of ours. By the way, nurse, you want a new cap, and you shall have it.”

So far well. Who should, however, call three days later, but this identical Mrs. Pompenny, this identical Mrs. Pompenny’s baby, and this identical Mrs. Pompenny’s nurse; and what should Mrs. Pom-

penny's nurse say to Mrs. Pompenny during the first minute's absence of my mother, but—

“Well'm, *this* is wot they calls a fine baby” (pointing to me with a look of unutterable contempt)—“all I say is'm, obsuv it and *Our Baby*.”

And what should Mrs. Pompenny reply but—

“Hush, nurse, it don't do to be proud; it ain't Christian. To be sure, that unfort'nate child—well, well, it don't affect us. By the way, nurse, you want a new bonnet, and you shall have one.”

Oh, the perfidious wretches! From this hour forth I vowed eternal distrust of nurses; and when, some time afterwards, I saw my mother, after a similar piece of flattery, about to bestow on Bet another cap, my soul revolted, and, being unable to speak, I sneezed twice, hoping my mother might understand that as a hint not to give the cap. But she didn't; and did. (I mean she didn't understand the hint, and did give the cap.)

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## II.

## THE MOTHER OF THE INFANT TAKEN DOWN.

It is a curious circumstance that the one person in my family who was indifferent to my charms, nay, with whom I stood in black disfavour, was my cousin Bea, and yet it is not altogether curious either.

Small and smart, there are many who say there never was any standing my cousin Bea. There certainly was no standing her at the time of which my story here deals, that is to say, in the early part of my first year, at which time Miss Bea was four and a half. And not a little proud was she then of that circumstance, though now she never alludes to her age. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis:—Cousin Bea at four, and Cousin Bea at four and forty, are two very different things.*

We have here to deal with Cousin Bea at four.

No one, I suppose, is ignorant of the fact that a lady does not live to that ripe age without forming some very strong opinions. My cousin Bea had three:—

Firstly.—Babies were “unbear’ble.”

Secondly.—Baby-boys were “spessily unbear’ble.”

Thirdly.—Of all baby-boys the most “unbear’ble” was “*him*.”

By this pronoun, never varying the case, Cousin Bea designated the hero of this narrative.

Not if you had promised her another golden ringlet (and that was what they always promised Bea, if she would be “good”), not if you had promised her *two* golden ringlets to add to her own hair of gold, would Bea have budged from the doorway, where she stood, with a corner of her pinafore between her teeth, scowling at “*him*.” If you had promised her half-a-dozen golden ringlets, she would certainly have made a tiny step forward, because she dearly would have liked to have had dangling behind her, with the rest, half-a-dozen more golden ringlets; but, no, though you had promised her all the hair in all the world to put on to her own little head—it would have been a *glorious* promise—but she could never, never have brought herself to stand beside “*him*.”

“No, never!”

And now, if you will look at her pinafore, you will find that Bea’s little teeth have bitten a hole in it; and if you will look in Bea’s eyes, you will find that there are two big tears in them; and if you

will lay your hand on her heart, you will find it is beating quick, quick; and if you will take her hand in yours, you will find it is hot and trembling; and if you have found out all that, and are a poet, you will make a poem of it; and if you have found out all that, and are a painter, you will make a picture of it; but if you have found out all that, and are a mother of London town, you will say, as Bea's mother did,—

"Oh, fie! little gals were never jealous in my time!"

Having said which, Bea's mother bent again over the cradle of the infant, and the infant's mother for the hundredth time said,—

"Isn't he a beauty!"

Gracious me, such pride! and all about a baby!

Cousin Bea could stand it no longer. Throwing back her golden mane, she rushed into the room, and up to the infant's mother,—

"There are fif—fif—fif—," no, she could not get out the word with sheer impatience.

"Well, Bea, what's the matter?" said the mother of the infant.

"There are fif—fif—*fifteen* mothers besides you, and there are fif—fif—*fifteen* babies besides *him*!"

There, if you please, was a crusher for Mrs. Wriggley! Not for nothing has Miss Bea learnt to

count to fifteen. My goodness, as if the world were not overrun with mothers and their babies!

*"Oh, what a pert little gal!"* said Bea's mother.

*"Fie, what a pert little gal!"* said the mother of the infant.

But the infant, who had a sense of humour, chuckled and stretched out his arms; and pleased that one, at least, should not join in the chorus against her, the pert little gal hid her rosy face beside his.

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## III.

## THE PERT LITTLE GAL'S REVENGE.

WHEN the pert little gal raised her golden head from beside the infant, it was to find herself and the infant alone; so that, excepting herself—and ten to one she has forgotten all about it—the infant alone in the world knows what took place.

And he has not forgotten, and now that forty years have elapsed, and juvenile etiquette no longer forbids him to “tell on her,” he means to say what she did during that *l'le-d-l'le* between her and himself.

Miss Bea stood at the side of the cradle, looked at the infant, smiled, said, “Him pretty!” bent down and gave the infant two big kisses.

Well, the compliment, “Him pretty,” would have been pleasing from any lady so distantly related as, after all, a lady-cousin is; but coming from Bea, that is to say, direct from the enemy's camp, it was peculiarly gratifying, and I remember feeling how much I should like to rise and make my best bow; but, unfortunately, I had not yet had lessons in

dancing and general deportment, and there is perhaps nothing which makes a man feel more awkward than that. I made a grand mistake; I did not even fulfil the commands of commonest politeness. Whether it was bashfulness, or that I really did not know what is etiquette for a gentleman to do when a lady kisses him, I know not. I only know that I looked at Bea in a sort of stupid wonder, and that she in return looked at me with an unmistakable curl of her baby-lips as she said,—

*"Him doesn't kiss back."*

That was the grand mistake I had made, and so well was I punished for it, that I have never since fallen into the like error. Perhaps there is nothing, and justly so, which a lady resents more than when you do not respond to her advances, and that instantly. I, like the inconceivably stupid infant that I was, had let the moment slip, had not attempted to return Bea's kisses, and only when I saw the coming cloud, that is to say, a full minute after, much too late, of course, put on what at that time was considered my killing smile, as much as to say,—

*"Now, Bea, if you like."*

But Bea was offended, and a lady of spirit. My killing smile was wasted. She gave me a blighting look, which said, as plain as words, "You are curi-



ously mistaken, my dear sir, if you think that a lady who has learnt to count up to fifteen cannot spell dignity and REVENGE," whereupon she trotted off, looking behind the curtains, then in and under the beds; she even, with infinite labour, pushed in a large drawer, as much as to say, "Any one hiding there shall not get out;" then she carried a chair to the door, because she could not reach up to the handle, and having climbed on the chair, she found the handle too low, so, by the mere pressure of her two little pink hands laid flat on the door-panel, and swaying forward her body, shut the door; after which, with her forefinger raised, as much as to say, "Quietly, Bea!"—for there was only herself making a sound in the room—she came and stood again before the infant. And if ever a little face in a frame of gold looked up to mischief, it was at this moment the face of Miss Bea. Her red lips were parted, and showed the teeth that had bitten a hole in her pinafore—sharp, little, white teeth, horribly suggestive to the infant.

"Him smile no more," she said, with a gruesome smirk on her wicked little face.

And she said the truth. "Him" looked at her much as the mouse may look at a sweet little kitten. "Him" was in a horrible fright. "Him"

would have gnashed his teeth, had he had any to gnash.

Miss Bea meanwhile had evidently not yet made up her mind on the course of action which she meant to adopt. Having taken these preliminary measures, to the infant like the whetting of the knife previous to taking the pound of flesh, she sat down, clasped her hands, and grew so preternaturally quiet, that the infant quaked more than ever. And here a word on Bea's character.

She had not for nothing got the name of the "pert little gal." She had profited by her first Bible lesson to pass the thoughtful remark that she wished she had been Adam and Eve's little girl, "'cause they never could say how good they were as children;" and certainly if there was ever a small maiden to whom the term "good," with all its delightful suggestiveness of priggdom, could not be applied, that same was little Bea. If she put method into anything, it was into naughtiness. Unlike your ordinary child, she did not get into an occasional scrape; excepting when asleep, there was hardly any time when she was not in one, and that of her own definite planning. The first thing in the morning, when she had rubbed the sleep out of her eyes with her little fists, she would sit up in bed, and with a deeply solemn expression (for it was a matter that

needed infinite thought) would make out a plan of the day's mischief, weighing the pleasure of the various escapades with which she might improve the shining hours against the undeniable pain of the punishment that would ensue on them: a "slap" for this, "the corner" for that, and, in all likelihood, a very sound thrashing to wind up the day. These were not pleasant prospects, but, weighed against the pleasure of tasting the forbidden fruit, they sank into insignificance. Bea was not made of wax, and to one of her philosophical turn a thrashing more or less was a matter of minor importance.

To have a young woman of this species seated at the head of one's cradle, evidently devising mischief, and mischief to be directed against oneself, was not pleasant. I believe I groaned. Bea looked at me; then, all the mingled naughtiness and knowingness in her bursting forth, she said,—

"Him will scream when I bite him." (This in accents somewhat dismal, but determined and resigned.)

"Him will scream," she repeated in a kind of tragic monotone, then bent down and deliberately took between her little teeth the infant's ear.

Needless to say, her prophecy was fulfilled. "Him" screamed so loudly that Miss Bea relaxed her hold. Then there was silence, as before.

Caution whispered not to repeat this game. Miss Bea puckered her brow, and waited for a new and happy idea to strike her.

This it did very soon.

She had been contemplating the infant's nose. It was a small nose. The noses of infants, excepting in the East, are commonly small. It appeared to Bea absurdly tiny, so tiny that she gave a little chuckling laugh, a delicious thought having struck her in connection with it.

"Could him sneeze, I wonder?"

"Him," with a sickening feeling, turned away his head; and Miss Bea, all alive with this new idea, was trotting round the room in a sprightly manner in search of "salts," when the door opened, and—enter Mrs. Wriggley.

Do you think Miss Bea blushed?

Not she!

Up she went to the mother of the infant,—

"Him pretty. Bea gave him two beautiful kisses."

Having said which, out of the room and down the stairs, with her baby-face and her golden curls, went, in the odour of sanctity, little Miss Bea.

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## PART III.

*Some Sarcastic Remarks on the Subject of what's in a Name; an Account of how Mrs. Wiggley put the Thing delicately, together with the Introduction of Uncle Buffer.*

## I.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I CAN well remember how intensely amused I used to be as a baby at the appellation an "infant in arms." I was between three and four months old when I first heard it applied to myself, and my sense of the comical, which has always been strong, was just then at its acme.

The subject under debate was a hat, my father disapproving of the one selected by my mother as too beribboned, too girlish. My father, I believe, would have liked me to wear a tall hat at once; not so my mother.

"Too beribboned, Erbet?" said she, holding the hat from her as young ladies in shops do, when they say, "This style very fashionable." "Too

beribboned, Erbet? Nonsense, and he an infant in arms."

Now considering I was hardly ever "in arms," a lot which I daresay I shared with many a babe, I had positively to hold my sides under the bed-clothes not to burst out laughing at this. Afraid as I was to breathe, lest I should betray myself, I grew, I suppose, apoplectic-looking; for, popping the little hat on to my father's head, as the object nearest her, my mother exclaimed,—

"Good heavens, Erbet, look at the baby, he's purple in the face! Quick, get the 'Guide to Mothers,' and find out what's to be done when babies get purple in the face. There, there, was it its mother's nobsy-pobsy!" and she took me up and began walking the length and breadth of the room with me, while my father, seated on a band-box at the foot of the bed (dear me, how the scene comes back!), unconscious of the little beribboned hat adorning his manly head, rummaged in the "Guide to Mothers" in search of something that would restore my complexion to its pristine whiteness.

Not to have much ado about nothing, also not to succumb to laughter, so comical to me with my humorous vein was the picture presented by *pater meus*, like Nelly Bly "I shut my eye," pretending to be asleep.

Hereupon I was at once by the maternal hands laid back in bed.

I do not wish to blame my mother for this; all I say is that, considering the hours which an infant spends lying on its back in its cradle, or creeping about the carpet on all fours, after the manner approved by the author of "Emile," that, compared with these, the moments which it spends "in arms" are few and far between, why give the young man, during the first twelve months of his existence, the standing appellation of "infant in arms?" It is a social sham and humbug, and in the name of the "Society for the Suppression of Sham and Humbug," of which society, as an infant, I had the honour to be a member, *down with it*, say I.

I have visions of babes at once joining in my cry. In the distance I seem to see them, in full uniform, sleeve-knots and crochet-boots, with bibs for banners; host upon host I see them, all the babes that "*never, hardly ever*" were in arms, and who therefore, like me, justly resent the appellation that would imply their never having been in any other attitude.

Infant in arms, indeed! Well, to return to that hat. It was one of the most beautiful specimens of its kind ever seen, and became me even better than my respected father, though *he* did look what

vulgarians of the day would call "awfully jolly" in it.

Now this hat had been bought in honour of the expected visit of my Uncle Buffer, and it is the divers other preparations for that visit which I forthwith mean to narrate.

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## II.

## FAM'LY AFFECTION AND LAUGHTER ON THE STAIRS.

It is a human weakness the wide world over to believe in first impressions. I, common with the rest of mortality, have an idea that my first impressions are always right, and I confess that—like some other people whom I have known—I regard it much in the light of a personal insult when an individual, whom I have at first sight set down as abominable, and have mentioned the fact to my friends, with my “mark my words” expression—when said individual turns out to be an excellent creature, worth six of myself, thereby obliging me to change my opinion, and causing my friends to smile “their little smile.”

This being so, it will be understood with what real gratification I reflect that the first impressions produced on me in my earliest infancy by the various members of my family have invariably proved to be right. I will in candour add, that I attribute this largely to the fact that even your

most reserved people have not the least hesitation to exhibit themselves in their true colours to the infant observer, whence that personage has opportunities for forming opinions which, if not always golden, are at least always correct.

I just now recall a number of scenes of which, excepting in my capacity as babe, I should never have been a witness—mere passing events which yet, as though in a mirror, revealed to me the character of the actors. One scene comes back to me in a peculiarly vivid manner. On it I based the opinion which I ever after held of my Uncle Buffer.

My Uncle Buffer was the giant of the family; not that, like Og, the King of Bashan, he needed a bed nine cubits long, but a giant he was, nevertheless, in the full modern, non-Scriptural acceptance of the word; the sort of man at sight of whom you instinctively push up the gasalier.

“Dear me, how I wish his visit were over,” said my mother for something like the hundredth time on the morning of his arrival. “Measure the width of that bed, will you, Erbet? I’ve measured the length myself; take your handkerchief to it, dear, and just tell me how many handkerchiefs wide it is. And, dear, I want you to look if any of the chairs are ricketty, and, if so, send them up to the attics.

Don't tread on that needle, ducky, there, quite close to your foot. And did I tell you, Erbet (six handkerchiefs — well, strange, that's just what I should have thought!)—did I tell you, dear, to say you think he'll find the leather chair comfortable? That will be putting the thing delicately. Fat men are always so sensitive. Dear, dear, how I wish his visit were over!"

"Why the—I mean, why, then, on earth did you ask him?" exclaimed my father.

"Well, that *is* like a man," said my mother in her most indignant manner. "Why, fam'ly affection, of course! Do you expect your wife to forget she has a brother, Erbet?"

My father sighed. It would certainly have been most remarkable had he had any such expectation, the conversation having run on my Uncle Buffer ever since dawn that day.

"If he were not so absurdly big," proceeded my mother, "of course I should not mind; but having such an amount of flesh makes men so reckless. They're not like women, they never get used to themselves. I'm sure it's no smiling matter, Erbet." (My father had indulged a faint twinkle.) "Dear me, if women were not serious, I wonder what the world would come to? As if I don't remember him as a boy—always in trouble, in sheer

awkwardness knocking down the parlour ornaments, or sitting on the kitten, which reminds me—oh, Erbet, if he should sit on the baby!”

Here was a new and weird thought. My mother fairly wrung the hair-brush, doing her hair as she was at the time. As for my father, he made his escape out of the room, and I distinctly heard him laughing on the stairs, laughing as a school-boy laughs, with a glorious self-abandonment, now aloud, now with his handkerchief stuffed down his throat, quite, quite unconscious that at the open door behind his back stood madam, taking in the scene and mentally commenting thereon; then returning to her mirror silently, but with a curl of her lip and a look in her eye highly suggestive to the infant. A minute later my father returned.

“What were you doing out of the room, Erbet?” said my mother calmly. She had made one side of her hair into a tight roll, which she held between her teeth while brushing the other side. This gives a picturesque appearance, whilst curiously affecting the voice.

“Fetching my boots, dear,” replied my father on the impulse of the moment.

My mother looked at him, and never did face bear scrutiny better. There was in it the child-like look of innocence which never failed to strike

me in the paternal physiognomy after the owner had been guilty of some peculiarly flagrant breach of home rules. One of the most emphatic of these was that no one should ever view my mother from the humorous point. This was a thing she could not endure, and which more than anything caused her to enlarge on the lack of seriousness in men; for needless to say, it was the men of the family, headed by myself, the coming man, who saw and relished in my mother the deliciously comical little lady that she was. It takes, perhaps, a woman to describe a woman, but it takes a man to relish the original.

My father had returned from his burst of merri-  
ment as sober as a judge.

"Fetching my boots, dear," he repeated in what he evidently considered his best manner, which had always something of the good boy in it—and raising his eyes to hers. Here I will say that I think I never saw such frank eyes as my father's.

My mother simply looked at his feet, and said with what elocutionists call "the rising inflection,"—

"Your boots, Erbet, are on you, and were on you before you left the room."

This, sticking the last pin into her hair.

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## III.

## PUTTING THE THING DELICATELY.

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THERE is a species of silence which I do not think I have ever seen described, and the peculiar feature of which is that you know instinctively it will not last. It is not so much the absence of sound, as the heralding thereof. To use a poetical figure, it is like the hush between the call and the echo.

Just such a silence had fallen between my mother and father.

My mother looked disgust personified—and not unnaturally so; for to find the spouse of your bosom guilty of a flagrant fib is sad.

My father looked humiliation personified—and naturally so; for to have told a fib in what you consider your neatest manner, and to be ruthlessly convicted on the spot, is sad also.

I think I never saw a more perfect case of collapse than that of my father. He did not attempt to brazen the matter out. He looked at his feet,

and then slowly slunk to the bed, and sat down on the edge of it.

In credit to my mother I will add, that beyond that withering speech and a gaze that would have annihilated any one but my father, she did not go. She even cast a pitying look at the blighted being seated on the edge of the bed; then she said, with what struck me as true magnanimity,—

“To return to the subject of which I was speaking, Erbet—”

“Yes, Molly,” said my father with a sigh. Like the oyster with the carpenter, he thanked her much for that.

“What terrifies me about my brother Will’m is, not only that he himself is so big, but everything about him is so big,—his voice, his laugh, *his kiss*. His kiss, Erbet, would take away the baby’s breath. I mean to put it delicately to him that he is not to kiss the baby.”

“How could you manage that?”

“Oh, women can manage most things, Erbet.”

There was on the word “women” an emphasis painfully suggestive.

My father looked at his boots, winced, and was silent.

“An unfort’nate thing about Will’m,” proceeded my mother, “is that, like all fat men, he is sen-

sitive, and sees in the least remark an unfeeling allusion."

"He that has a meikle nose thinks ilka ane speaks o't," said my father, rather proud of being able to bring in a Scotch proverb.

My mother lost her temper.

"For goodness' sake speak English, and not Latin, Erbet! As I was saying, I must put it delicately to my brother Will'm that I will not have him kiss the baby."

"Yes, Molly dear."

My father had no doubt of her hitting on a plan. He believed implicitly in woman's art, no matter what the situation, to hit on a pretty round-about speech in the middle of which, like the apple in the dumpling, will be stowed away the main ingredient.

My mother, who had sat with her head on her hands, looked up,—

"I shall say to him, Erbet—"

"Yes, dear?"

He was really curious to know on what plan she had hit.

"I shall say to him, Erbet—I shall say, '*Will'm, you must not kiss my baby!*'"

There was an unexpected noble simplicity in this, which left my father mute, and not until a



moment or so had elapsed did he utter in a kind of guttural monotone those three words, the combination of which forms one of the most crushing idioms in our language,—

“Is that all?”

“Goodness me, Erbet!” exclaimed my mother, not a little nettled, “what would you have me say more?”

“More?” Mechanically my father repeated the word. “Pray goodness, Molly, I may be out of the way when you say that much, if that is your style of *putting the thing delicately*.”

“Please’m, please, sir—Mr. Buffer,” said a voice at the door.

“Show him into the parlour, Nancy, and tell him your master will be with him at once. Now, Erbet, don’t keep him waiting. I must get out baby’s best shoulder-knots.”

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## IV.

UNCLE BUFFER.

"—ach! sein Kuss!"—FAUST.

SUCH a puffing and panting and creaking I certainly never heard as on my Uncle Buffer's coming upstairs shortly afterwards with my mother, who, as I could hear, was "putting things delicately" to him all the way,—

"Will'm, baby's asleep, couldn't you tread a little softer, dear?"

"Will'm, he's so easily waked, would you mind speaking a little lower?"

And finally,—

"Will'm, just one thing more—" (Here followed a whispered exhortation.)

"Well, Molly, 'pon my word!" said my Uncle Buffer.

"*Please* don't," replied my mother. "I should have no fear if he were older, but he's so very small. Why, there's Erbet calling me as if the house

were on fire. Tiresome man!" and she hastened off, only whispering hastily to Bet that she would be back at once, and,—

"As you value its life, nurse, *don't let Mr. Buffer kiss the baby.*"

"No'm," said Bet, and smiled.

What I like to remember about Bet is her pretty smile, also her rosy face, her snow-white cap and apron.

Said she, holding me out in her arms, when my mother had left the room,—

"Well, sir, did you ever see a finer baby?"

"Let me look at the boy," said Uncle Buffer, and bent forward until his face almost, but not quite, touched mine.

"There, I *knew* you would kiss him, Will'm!" exclaimed my mother, who returned in nearly the same moment; "and, as I thought, he is frightened out of his wits."

A kiss it had certainly been, that would have taken away the breath of any normal baby. Never before had I heard such a kiss, never since have I heard such a kiss. It was a kiss worthy of Uncle Buffer.

But my mother was labouring under a grand mistake. It had not been for me.

I have said, I think, that what I like to remember about honest Bet is her pretty smile, also her rosy face, her snow-white cap and apron.

Oh, Uncle Buffer.

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## PART IV.

*The Infant and Honest Bet apropos of the Infant's  
First Tooth.*

## THE INFANT AND HONEST BET.

By slow degrees the infant had reached the period of "Sturm und Drang," or, as we say in English, the teething period.

A German writer, Heine, or Börne, tells us that during his entire life he suffered from "toothache of the heart" (a very common complaint in Germany), a pathetic fact poetically expressed. With the recollection of my teething period still fresh in my memory, I can heartily sympathize with that German.

Thanks to my cousin Bea and the marks of her pearly teeth left in my ear, I knew what teeth were, and was early made aware that the inside of the mouth in the human subject does not always remain the soft, pulpy thing that was the inside of my mouth during the first months of my existence. With reference to the tortures gone through during

the teething period—the toothache at once of the heart and gums—I will only say that if you can imagine the bone of your great toe slowly working its way up through your entire anatomy till it reaches the head, this is precisely the feeling. In proof of this statement I would draw your attention to the fact that during the teething period, and the period immediately preceding and following it, more than at any other time of his life, a man hugs his toe.

I remember one day lying in this very attitude and thinking to myself was it possible that all this pushing would end in there appearing only a little tooth, such as one of Bea's; pushing attended by pain so excruciating that it took all the man in me not to shriek from morning to night. I may add that I had done a fair bit of work in the screaming line on this very day, and only gave myself up to this meditation during a pause, in which I lay back, as honest Bet thought, getting up my strength to be "at it again." She even began showering on me what I suppose to have been endearing epithets, but of which I only remember that they were uttered between her teeth and mostly began as follows:—

"Oh, you little—" and, "Shouldn't I like—"

Meanwhile I disappointed her expectation of going "at it again," having exhausted the strength

of my lungs for the time being. Honest Bet thereupon bent over me, and, running her finger along my gums (I have the feeling of this as I write), said,—

“I believe it do be comin’.”

She then fell into a reverie, but at intervals talked aloud, as was her wont; while I, as was my wont, listened.

Looking into the air, but still keeping her fingers between my gums, and more especially resting where a slight excrescence seemed to indicate the coming tooth, she murmured,—

“I’d like it grey, I think.”

“Bless me,” I almost exclaimed, “I shouldn’t!”

“No, I think I’d like black better.”

“Black? Goodness forbid!” thought I.

“Red don’t look bad, but it do look too striking.”

“That it do,” I gasped mentally, forgetting my English in my horror.

“On the whole a dark-blue would be the best, I think.”

This was said in such a calm tone of conviction, and running her finger so complacently along my gums, that I was positively unable to form any mental answer on the spot. I could only picture to my imagination myself with a dark-blue tooth, and groan. Was this wretched being rubbing some dye

(possibly Reckitt's blue) on my gums, to realize her idea of the beautiful?

I lay aghast, and honest Bet was silent; then opening my mouth, and looking carefully into it, she said—

“I'd like it long—quite touching the ground.”

There are human emotions which human language is inadequate to portray. A tooth growing out of my mouth till it touched the ground! No words can describe how I felt, as I contemplated this prospect. To say that the drops of cold perspiration gathered on my brow, is to say almost nothing.

Bet continued calmly running her finger along my gums.

Happily my mother entered the room at this moment,—

“Well, nurse, how is he doing?”

Bet looked up and smiled,—

“Tooth's a-coming'm.”

She had such a pretty smile, had Bet, if she only would not have shaken her fist at me when mother was out of the room.

“Is it really? Well, and what do you want your new dress to be like, nurse?”

“Please'm”—Bet looked down. She could look down so prettily, could Bet,—



"Please'm, dark-blue."

So that was what it all came to; and a very pretty custom that, too, by which nurse gets a new dress on the advent of baby's first tooth—but the infant in arms knew not of it.

"And is he good, nurse?"

"Good'm? A hangel best describes 'im."

Oh, honest Bet!

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## PART V.

*Two more of the Infant's Relations; to wit Aunt  
Septima Bogey and Uncle Taff.*

## I.

## THE INFANT AND AUNT BOGEY.

A FEATURE which I respect in the infant in arms is that there is not the least good in your trying to prejudice it. It forms its own opinion, and sticks to it. It cares not a straw what titles you have, or what reputation you bear. You may do the killing young man or you may do the pompous old gentleman; you may drag into the conversation your wealthy aunts or your aristocratic uncles; you may even *en passant*, mention your cousin, the bishop; the infant in arms will continue to study you placidly with his little eye, not one whit impressed.

This I observed only yesterday on paying a visit to an acquaintance, whom I wished to let know that my cousin, Bob Purvis, had been knighted for success in the musical line. Well, this is not the

sort of thing one can start a conversation with, so I asked to see the baby. As luck would have it, the youngster chuckled the instant he laid eyes on me (I have one of those peculiarly genial faces that always please the young idea), and I, doing the thing rather neatly, as I still think, said in my airy way,—

“Music that to a father’s ear, eh, Robinson? Talking of music, you know, I suppose, that my cousin, Bob Purvis, has been knighted?”

“Bless me, no, heard nothing about it,” said Robinson, and almost wrung my hand off. I do not think we were ever so chummy before. Suddenly I caught a glimpse of the infant’s eye, taking in the scene. He was sucking his thumb, which more than anything lends philosophic repose to the face. As to his offering to shake hands, nothing apparently was further from his thoughts. He merely looked at me, and if ever a look said distinctly, “It seems to me, poor old boy, you are making a pitiful fool of yourself,” it was the gaze of Robinson’s baby. To this minute I cannot conceive how I managed to drag my crushed atoms away. Yet I confess I admire this trait in the infant in arms. Nay, I am proud to remember that it formed a leading feature in my own disposition as infant, to which circumstance I attribute the fact that I alone

in the family valued as she deserved my Aunt Septima.

One reason of this was, no doubt, that to me alone was it granted to make her acquaintance at that age at which alone a man has the courage of his convictions.

There is in most families, I suppose, an Aunt Sep, known by the following tokens: she is elderly, single, and is made the children's bogey.

"What will your Aunt Sep say, I wonder?"

"Wait till I tell your Aunt Sep!"

And so on, until "your Aunt Sep" finds herself an object of awe so intense that she begins to think in good earnest she must be a sort of Moloch. This conviction takes such firm hold of her, that she begins instinctively to assume the terrific gestures of the idol of the Ammonites, shaking her knitting-needle, for example, in a manner awful to witness.

A funny thing in connection with Aunt Bogey is that, by dint of frightening the children with her, you begin to fear her yourself, so that by degrees she becomes an object of awe at once to herself, the children, and you. In like manner I suppose that those worthies who hold up the sweep to their children as especially awe-inspiring, end by themselves turning pale at his sight, and promising

to be good if he only will not beat them. This must highly amuse Brother Smut. Perhaps Aunt Bogey is also amused, perhaps she is not; and in that last "perhaps" there is just a touch of sadness.

But to give a description of my Aunt Septima. To begin with, she was not the last, but, strange to say, the first of seven children, my father being the sixth. Whether my grandparents had from the beginning made up their minds to have seven children, and thought of naming them in backward numerical order (there was no other Sep. in the family, or in the family-circle of friends and acquaintances, after whom she could have been called), whether they were thinking of the seven liberal arts, the seven mountains, the seven that went against Thebes, the seven stars, the Seven Years' War, the seven sleepers, the seven wise men, the seven lean kine, the seven fat kine, or the seven world-wonders, nobody knows; but, certain it is, that their thoughts were running on sevens when they named my aunt, *à propos de bolles* (which reminds me that I have omitted the seven-league boots), Septima.

Meanwhile, let us take a peep at Aunt Sep herself, instead of troubling our heads further about a name, the invention of which, like the invention of

the name given to a branch of our mail conveyance—to wit, the parcels post—must ever remain a mystery.

At the time of which this story treats, when I was in my first year, Aunt Sep was what she herself called an old-young lady, that is to say, according to her own account, thirty-five. She had been thirty-five for some years previously, and remained thirty-five till her death, which took place ten years afterwards. If she were living still, I believe she would still be thirty-five, because she had made up her mind on this subject, and she was not your sort of person to make up her mind on this or any other subject, and then change it, a trait, which I, for one, respect in her. In the winter of her life she had no notion of sitting with her feet on the fender; on the contrary, she rose and linked her arm in that of Time, like the brave lady that she was, and with her gentle woman's voice asked him "to walk a little slower, please," which the grumpy old fellow did, because there was never yet an old fellow so grumpy but would hearken to a woman's appeal, if she only put it prettily.

Just a wee bit vain was my Aunt Sep. This peeped out in the little twitch which, when she sat down, she would give to her dress—for what purpose, think you? . Why, simply to give a full view

of her feet, which, she said, with that blush which sometimes steals under a shrivelled skin, since true woman will be true woman to the last, "were always, my dear, considered pretty."

And this was the aunt whom they made the children's bogey.

When my mother brought her up to my cradle, it was with a look as much as to say, "What if she were to lay violent hands on the child!"

And my Aunt Sep bent over me. She would have thought it a breach of loyalty to the family not to keep up the *rôle* of bogey given to her. It made her of use, and kept little Bea in order. Aunt Sep bent over me, trying to keep up the awesome look, but something in her eyes betrayed her, and the wise little infant put up both his arms, and clasped them tight round her neck.

And now to Uncle Taff, for inseparably linked with the recollection of Aunt Bogey is that of Uncle Taff.

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## II.

## UNCLE TAFF, THE DOG WITH THE BAD NAME.

UNCLE TAFF was the dog with the bad name, and every one knows the English proverb in connection with that same. I call myself a philanthropist, partly because I like dogs. That society, or even that small portion thereof called the family, should give a bad name to any creature, largely for the pleasure of seeing him hanged, is to me abominable. There is, of course, a theory afloat that hanging is no longer a public affair in dear old England. No one seems to reflect that the dog with the bad name to this day is hanged where our men and our women and our children may gape at him. A horrid sight, a horrid custom! Shame on the men, on the women and children, that do not revolt at the spectacle.

Some of them do. Some women, a great many men, almost all the children, and *all* the infants in arms.

So with my Uncle Taff. Excepting myself, the infant, I suppose there was not a younger member



of our family, from little Bea up to Phil, the big hobbledehoy, who knew *why* Uncle Taff was the dog with the bad name; but that he was the dog with the bad name of course all of them knew. Bea never thought of obeying him; not that she scorned him; she openly patronized him, and loved better to play leap-frog and hide-and-seek with him than with any one else. But she would never have trusted her best doll to him, because, wee child though she was, to her it was patent, from the tone which the family assumed towards him, that "him naughty."

There was a gulf between them.

As for Phil, the big hobbledehoy, he made quite a display of his affection. I think Phil had an idea that Uncle Taff was an ex-desperado, and would some day be arrested for some daring crime—in the throat-cutting line—committed, of course, in foreign parts. Then he, Phil, meant to step forward as champion, and do something really magnificent.

Meanwhile he and Uncle Taff would go on boating expeditions together. But even in the big hobbledehoy's manner there was something of patronage, something at times of distrust. Uncle Taff was the dog with the bad name.

There was a gulf between them.

Uncle Taff was my father's brother, and lived with Aunt Sep, and this is what the infant heard Aunt Sep relate concerning him to the infant's mother, the two women being seated one on each side of his cradle:—

"As Herbert's wife," began Aunt Sep, "I don't mind speaking to you, Molly, about Taff. I, for my part, have always considered his great misfortune to be his pretty little ways. In our rank of life, dear—"

"Bless me, Sep, what can you mean by our rank of life?" exclaimed my mother.

"Simply the middle class, Molly."

Now whether my mother considered us as belonging to the peerage or what, I know not; but she fanned herself with a curl-paper in sheer impatience.

"In our rank of life, as I was saying," repeated Aunt Sep quietly, "I consider nothing more fatal to a man than pretty little ways. They only get him into trouble." Here she paused to pick up a stitch in her knitting, then continued, "I never, somehow, quite understand how Taff came by his pretty ways; he is certainly the only man in the family who—"

"Goodness me, Sep!" exclaimed my mother, up in arms at once, and fanning herself more vigorously than ever with her curl-paper, "if it comes to

that, I don't know of any one who has prettier little ways than Erbet! He's not a Venus, very few men are" (Aunt Sep, I thought, smiled faintly), "but I suppose his wife" (with dignity) "must know about his ways" (beginning to rock my cradle violently), "and extremely pretty ways he has, has Erbet, *in my opinion.*"

My aunt, like a sensible woman, waited for the storm which she had inadvertently conjured up to subside. This it did quickly, my mother catching a smile on my face, and stooping down to kiss me.

"Now tell me, Sep," she then said, with that wonderful calm which never failed to strike me in her after a vehement outburst, "now tell me, Sep, what has Taff *done.*"

"Why, that is just the thing, Molly; he has done *nothing*, and I do not think he will ever do anything. He's a dreamer; and then, of course, you know, Molly, he's *viewy.*"

This was said almost under her breath, as she bent lower than ever over her knitting.

My mother started.

"You don't mean to say, Sep, that he—?"

"I mean to say, dear, that he believes in pigs running about with knives and forks in their backs, crying, 'Who'll eat me?'—this kind of man always does—but he don't believe in anything else."

"Well, I understand now why all the family are down on him!"

"*I* don't, Molly; I could not be 'down' on any one."

"My goodness, Sep!" exclaimed my mother.

But Aunt Sep's face was bent over her knitting, and her lips were quivering. She loved the dog with the bad name the best of all her brothers.

Half an hour later both women had left the room. They had not been gone five minutes when Uncle Taff entered and stood beside the infant, and the infant closed his eyes, and Uncle Taff knelt down beside him, and gently, almost holding his breath, rocked the infant's cradle. . . .

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## PART VI.

*Prue Davis that was, and her Baby.*

## I.

## PRUE DAVIS THAT WAS.

SOMEWHERE in his delicious "Twice-told Tales," the "New-World Dreamer," Nathaniel Hawthorne, in writing of the maiden of fifty years ago, says, "*A white stocking is infinitely more effective than a black one.*"

He thereupon describes the old-time maiden: "*White muslin from the waist upwards, and black silk downwards to her slippers.*"

Thus attired do I picture to myself Prue Davis, when Mr. Pilman fell in love with her—five and forty years ago—five years before I was born.

Mr. Pilman had millions, a million, or part of a million. Accounts varied. Prue Davis had nothing. It was said with much charity, but with what truth I know not, that all the dowry which she

brought to her husband was a slate-pencil, on which she curled her hair.

When Mr. Pilman died, he left, besides his millions, his million, or part of a million, the prettiest little widow conceivable—none other, of course, than Prue Davis that was—and one child.

At the time of which this story deals, forty years ago, Prue, who had been an old school-fellow of my mother's, had been to see her more than once; but, as chance would have it, my mother had never been at home. Then Prue Davis that was, wrote a letter:—

*"Dear Molly, I want to see you and your baby. Try to be at home to-morrow for me and my baby.—Prue."*

"Heigh-ho!" sighed my mother, whom any reminder of Prue and that house of hers in the West, always made sigh.

"Heigh-ho!" echoed my father, wishing, if not that Prue, at least that that house in the West were at the bottom of the sea.

"Heigh-ho!" resumed my mother.

"Heigh-ho!" my father.

"Heigh-ho!" the two of them together.

They were sitting in their morning-gowns, each on one side of the bed. My mother turned round.

"Gracious me, Erbet, do stop heigh-hoing."

My father obeyed, putting two stockings on one foot in his trepidation.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed my mother.

"Heigh—" My father, about to echo her in sheer dolefulness, stopped himself, and began to whistle a melody about as classical as "Up in a balloon, boys!"

My mother turned round again. •

"Goodness me, Erbet, if there's one thing that do make me nervous, it's to hear a man whistling."

My father was silent, and began searching under the bed for his stocking, then walked across the room to look for it under the dressing-table.

"I dessay you're going about with them both on one foot," remarked my mother drily; and, on this turning out to be the case, added scornfully, "Certainly, Erbet, one might think sometimes you were non-compius-mentis, as the French say. You'll be going about with both feet in one stocking next."

"Goodness, Molly, you'd make the Pope laugh," exclaimed my father, bursting with merriment at this prediction.

"Perhaps so, Erbet," replied my mother with *hauteur*. "No doubt, Erbet, your wife is very *redic'lous*."

My father collapsed at once, an effect which the atmosphere of the frigid zone invariably had on

him. My mother was proud of her sarcastic vein, and used to maintain that, given provocation, with the back of an envelope, a stump of lead pencil, and the corner of a minute to think out an answer, she could have silenced any man living.

Meanwhile she was too good-natured to keep the ball rolling; so, having had her fling, she now remarked in that airy manner, which you may notice you commonly assume when returning to a subject which you have fairly exhausted,—

“With reference, Erbet, to this letter from Prue Davis that was, I’ve put out your Sunday clothes, dear, and—never mind your slippers, but put on your boots at once.”

“Is Mrs. Pilman going to call before breakfast?” mildly asked my father.

“No, of course not, Erbet, but, as I always say, one’s clothes get the sit by having them on some time.”

“You don’t mean to say that a man’s boots, Molly—”

“Boots are boots, whether a man’s or a woman’s, Erbet,” said my mother, taking exception to the qualifying noun. She was herself pulling on a boot with an expression of mute agony, and in an attitude finely illustrating what scientists call “the neutralization of each other caused by opposite tenden-



cies to motion," in her case motion forward of the foot, and motion backward of the boot and body.

My father smiled, and, luckily for him, was not seen to do so; then, kicking away his slippers, he put on his boots.

Some quarter of an hour later he was dressed, and my mother, who for a moment had looked rather taken aback by his quickness, struck an attitude, and exclaimed,—

"You *do* look so nice, Erbet."

Some men, like the grunter of song-celebrity, might have answered this with "umph—umph—umph." Not so my father, who had nothing of the grunter about him. I really think he blushed, as, beaming all over his face, he exclaimed,—

"My gracious, Molly, how you do flatter!"

Then he sat down and opened out his *Times*.

Now, that was just what my mother wanted.

"Ah, you rogue!" said she to the infant, who looked up and smiled.

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## II.

## MRS. WRIGGLEY PROCEEDS WITH HER DRESSING.

I SHALL perhaps be excused ushering in this chapter with a story of recent date. Some years ago a theatre on the Continent took fire during a crowded performance. The panic was terrible, but by the courage and presence of mind of the manager and a few others loss of life was prevented. The day following the accident thankful allusion was made to this circumstance in all the papers of the town in question, the general refrain being, "All's well that ends well."

These articles met with a veto which appeared in the leading paper next day. It was from a lady, who declared herself sorry to be obliged to contradict the prevailing rumour that no one had suffered from the fire, but the fact was, that in making her escape from the flames she had lost a new pair of galoshes.

All the town read and laughed; *why*, this good lady could never be brought to see.

There is a delicate kind of network that forty

years ago was almost as dear to every woman in England as to this lady were her galoshes. My mother would have thought it a sorry escape from any building that found her minus the packet of lace which she placed every night under her pillow, "in case of anything happening." Excepting on rare occasions she did not open this packet, because the sight of "the dear old point," made her dream of burglars and fire. When she did open it, it was with an almost reverent look, and she would no more have thought of amputating a piece of that lace, than she would have thought of cutting off her own right hand. When she wore a part of it round her neck, as, for instance, on the christening-day of the infant, it was with a little pocket made close to the throat of her dress, to contain the superfluous yards. In like manner, by way of a ruffle in each close-fitting sleeve she wore over fifty yards of the "dear old point," the superfluous nine and forty being artfully stowed away.

Now my father had hardly retired behind his newspaper, as described in the last chapter, when my mother approached her pillow, and took from under it her treasure.

Not a crease or a crumple could the infant detect in the lace, but the maternal eye judged differently. Folding it in long bands, she laid the first

piece tenderly, reverently, into a large tome. Then she approached my father,—

“Erbet, dear.”

“Yes, Molly.”

“Don’t let me disturb you, I want you to sit on some lace which I’ve laid in a book—if you’ll just raise yourself a little—thank you, ducky.”

My father continued reading, and my mother tenderly, reverently, folded the second piece of lace into similar bands, and laid it between the pages of the companion tome.

“Erbet, dear.”

“Yes, Molly.”

“Go on with your paper, I don’t want to disturb you, but you won’t mind sitting on this lace too? Just raise yourself a little—thank you, ducky.”

My father’s feet vanished off the ground, still he continued reading.

“Erbet, dear.”

“Well, Molly.”

“A bit of Brussels’, which I’ve laid in the Shakespeare. Just raise yourself a little.”

“Is it the last?” asked my father, in a voice faintly suggestive of thunder in the air.

“Yes. Thank you, Erbet.”

My father’s feet had left the ground far behind him, perched as he was on three volumes of classic

literature. Still, like the philosopher that he was, he calmly continued reading his *Times*, rather shaking his head now and then at the doings of the government.

Meanwhile my mother, standing before her wardrobe, after a long debate within herself as to which of her silks she should wear, the canary-coloured or the puce, decided for the puce, doubtless thinking it would show up the lace better.

"And now, Erbet," she said shortly after, "if you're ready, I am. Bring the books down with you, dear, and we'll sit on them during breakfast."

And my mother floated out of the room, like a glorious balloon, in her vast crinoline, and with just a touch of pride in her manner (the result of this unaccustomed weekday grandeur), forgot to take me down with her, as was her wont. Not so my father, who, with the three tomes under one arm, took me in the other, and followed.

The breakfast passed over exceedingly quietly, the result of madam being in puce silk, and Mr. Wriggley in his Sunday coat, a thing which had never yet happened on a weekday, and which caused honest Bet to exclaim, as after the gloomy meal she carried away the howling Infant,—

"Lor', it do be a mockery of the blessed Sabbath!"

## III.

## THE SITUATION BECOMES DRAMATIC.

It is not likely that the elders of the family were decked out in puce silk and finest cloth, and that the infant, he also, was not to be dressed as befitted the occasion. My mother soon reappeared at the bedroom door, and with the *hauteur* which seemed inseparable from her manner on this day, and which was the more striking as contrasted with her usual genial bearing towards all beneath her, said, dropping the trill, as she always did when flurried,—

“Nuss, I wish the young master to be dressed in his Sunday soot.”

Well, as every one knows, they of royal blood are delivered not of sons and daughters, like the rest of humanity, but of princes and princesses. If my mother had spoken of the infant as “his Royal Highness,” Bet could not have looked more taken aback. Holding both arms akimbo she replied, trying to look in the moon:—

“Pleas’m, who *be* you speaking of?”

My mother, with an impatient gesture, took up her hand-glass and began studying her back hair, then said loftily,—

“I presoom, my son.”

“*Him*, ‘a son’!”

Bet lifted up her hands and gave the infant a look of unutterable contempt. Had the term been synonymous with King of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India, she could not have appeared more indignant at its application to the small person in question.

“*Him*, ‘a son’!”

The infant with his thumb in his mouth waited for the situation to develop. This it did very soon; for, with all the dignity of all the Buffers in her voice, Mrs. Wriggley pointed to the door,—

“You seem to forget the respect doo to your master’s wife, nuss. You may leave the room.”

A more unexpected, and, in the family of Wriggley, more unprecedented turn of affairs, cannot be imagined. Out of the room flounced Bet, but not without leaving a comment behind her,—

“No, I suttently never! One couldn’t be in a wuss temper, not if one was dressin’ for chutch!”

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## IV.

## PRUE DAVIS THAT WAS AND HER BABY.

AFTER all these preparations, at last eleven o'clock came, and with it Prue Davis that was, so little, so fair, and in mourning so quiet, that even Bet forgot to be angry; so little, so fair, and in mourning so quiet, that the infant, perched on a cushion in the best parlour, took his thumb out of his mouth and gazed at her; so little, so fair, and in mourning so quiet, that the infant's father looked at his wife, and wished she had not put on her puce dress.

"So glad to see you, dear Molly," said Prue. "How are you?"

"Oh, I am well enough; and how are you, Prue? You know my husband. *Herbet*, you know Mrs. Pilman."

My father smiled. Many a time as a boy had he romped with little Prue Davis; many a time as a youth had he danced with pretty Prue Davis—*"white muslin upwards from the waist, black silk downwards to her slippers."*



There was silence for a moment and constraint, doubtless from the contrast between the widow's mourning and my mother's flashing puce. Then the widow touched me with her hand,—

"Your baby, Molly?"

"Why, yes," replied my mother; cross, I think, herself, she knew not why.

Prue did not seem to notice it; she bent and looked into my eyes.

"He can see," she said, half to herself.

"Bless me, yes," exclaimed my mother tartly, "I should think he can. He don't look blind, I hope."

"No, dear," said Prue, "but neither does my baby"—and she lifted its veil,—“and my baby is blind. Molly, my baby is blind!”

There was silence deeper than before, but constraint no longer. Two women, forgetful of all else, had fallen weeping upon each other's necks.

Then my father crept away softly, then honest Bet crept away softly, taking me with her.

. . . . .

"Nurse!" it was my mother speaking an hour later; as she stood beside Bet, who had me on her lap. "Nurse!" it was my mother speaking, her brave voice trembling. And Bet, stooping over the infant,

and letting two hot tears fall on him, fairly blubbered out,—

“Lor’m, don’t! It was me as was an impudent ’ussey.”

Such the end to the visit of Prue.

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## PART VII.

*An account of the "Do" in honour of the Infant's being six months old; Introduction of Peo and Teo, also of Cousin Peeny, together with an account of how Mr. Clutterby grunted and little Miss Bea distinguished herself.*

## I.

OLD CLUTTERBY, AND A DEBATE BETWEEN THE INFANT'S PARENTS WITH REFERENCE TO THE "DO."

You know the sort of man who in society studies the wall-paper:—

Old Clutterby.

You have met with the sort of man who in the train sits and looks at the knob of his stick:—

Old Clutterby.

You have among your acquaintances the sort of man who makes continual use of his hat during Church service:—

Old Clutterby.

You are aware that there exists a sort of man

who, when the collection begins, looks in his pocket for money which never is there:—

Old Clutterby.

If you have not among your acquaintances this sort of man, have never met this sort of man, nay, are not even aware that this sort of man exists, you are exceedingly happy; but in that case ten to one you are not a paterfamilias, since few are the fathers of families who have not among their acquaintances this sort of man, the dread of the children, the horror of the infant in arms.

In my family they would as soon have thought of not having a Christmas pudding as of not inviting old Clutterby to spoil the flavour of it; and never was the Sunday roast especially nice but either my mother or father would say,—

“Dear me, what a pity we didn’t invite old Clutterby!”

It never seemed to strike either of them that the very fact of old Clutterby being there would have taken the flavour from the roast as it took the flavour from the Christmas pudding.

To me a very peculiar example of extremes meeting is the fact that the pet aversion of old Clutterby and that of my golden-haired little cousin was the same,—babies.

Old Clutterby's stock phrase, which he repeated to every mother, was,—

*"Mind you, I don't like babies, and dislike their ways."*

Well, I have mentioned before that during the first months of my existence I laboured under the delusion that, as regards personal appearance, my speaking head, impressive figure, and dazzling *tout ensemble*, I was the most perfect specimen of my kind extant. I may add (and I do so as a warning to flattering parents) that I developed a similarly high notion of my fascinating social qualities. While preeminently a ladies' man, I could not fail to notice that my smile, which was peculiarly sweet, was found by even those of my own sex to be irresistible. Perhaps there is nothing which more flatters a man than this.

I do not exaggerate when I say that, excepting Mr. Clutterby and Bea, every one was ready to do me homage. As regards Bea, to whom I was still the "unbear'ble baby-boy," I will not deny that I found an explanation soothing to my vanity. Though her coolness piqued me not a little, as a young man going on for six months I could not but know enough of the world to see at a glance that it was largely due to my unaccountable bashfulness in not return-

ing her kiss on that luckless occasion described a few chapters back under heading,—

“The pert little gal’s revenge.”

That she, Bea, my own first cousin, should, however, have taken the part which she did in the Clutterby affair still fills me with wonder.

. . . . .

“I think, Erbet,” said my mother, “since Nobs will be six months old on Wednesday, we might give a little ‘Do.’”

“Yes, Molly.”

“Quite a family affair, of course; no outsiders, excepting Dr. Grimkey and, of course, old Clutterby.”

“I am glad you add that, dear, for I was just going to say, of course, old Clutterby.”

My mother grew pensive, then resumed the conversation, as was her wont, giving the fag-end of her thoughts,—

“The blue, I think, will do, Erbet, don’t you?”

My father could know no more than I what she meant,—whether china, window-curtains, table-cloth, her own dress, or my sleeve-ribbons; but questions my mother could never endure. They invariably sent her off on a tirade against the ex-tra-ord-inary obtuseness of men. So, doing his best to look as if he understood her, my father replied, promptly,—

"Why, indeed, not the blue? Blue looks as well as any other colour."

"Besides, we haven't got any other," said my mother.

My father, as I could see, was a trifle taken aback, having naturally thought from my mother's pensiveness that there was an *embarras de choix*. It is only after a long course of matrimony that a man begins to understand that a woman, if she have only one black dress, conjures up a possible wardrobe of others—blue, pink, and yellow—to have the pleasure of selecting her black; and so with everything she possesses.

Meanwhile, as my mother still waited for an answer, my father said in his briskest manner,—

"Why, yes, that makes it Hobson's choice, dear."

My mother only heard the "yes," which was perhaps as well; for she much disliked the introduction of "Hobson" and such-like legendary characters into the home conversation, a piece of pedantry which she viewed as on a par with "your scraps of Latin," under which denomination she included Scotch proverbs. This "habit of men" of seeking refuge behind quotations she was wont to say proved to her more than anything their poverty of ideas.

"Then you are quite of my opinion, Erbet, and it shall be the blue."

"Certainly, the blue," replied my father, succumbing to that lamentable weakness which makes a man ashamed to confess himself in the dark after playing the *rôle* of wide-awake.

"*Certainly*, the blue," he repeated.

My mother heaved a sigh of relief.

"Dear me, I can't say how glad I am we've settled that question, Erbet!"

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## II.

## THE "DO."

WEDNESDAY came, and with it the guests:—Uncle Buffer in a superb white waistcoat; Uncle Taff just a little seedy; Aunt Sep in black moiré-antique, looking a trifle "skimpy," my mother said, but decidedly genteel for all that; Phil, the big hobbledehoy, in a coat rather short at the sleeves, but with a spruce new neckerchief; Bea like a daisy in white and pink; and other Wriggleys and Buffers, and relations on the Wriggley and Buffer side, aunts, uncles, and cousins, past counting; also Dr. Grimkey—in a word, every one was there to the minute, but the all-important Mr. Clutterby.

"*Is* Mr. Clutterby asked?" exclaimed Uncle Taff at length. Hope of supper deferred was making his heart sick.

No one answered him; every one murmuring, "Goodness me!" as much as to say,—

"*Could* there be a family party without Mr. Clutterby?"

Uncle Taff was silent, and effaced himself in a

corner. Then Aunt Sep, who alone had not joined in the murmur, observed in her gentle way what a pretty light there was in the sky. This remark fell perfectly flat, eliciting no reply whatever, and Aunt Sep effaced herself in another corner. Here-upon Dr. Grimkey smiled, then coughed, then crossed the room, carrying his chair behind him, and sat down beside her.

All this was observed by me sitting on Bet's lap on the foot of the stairs in full view of the company, who, however, had the good taste not to appear aware of the fact, since my mother had intimated that they should "see the baby" when Mr. Clutterby came.

Here a word on some other members of the family who have not yet been introduced to the reader.

It always gives me pleasure to remember that there was not one member of my family who was not in his or her way an original.

There was my Aunt Mabel Wriggley, the sort of woman who always speaks as if she were in a suppressed fury, invariably starting with, "You may say what you like, but she for her part will maintain so-and-so, and don't you imagine that she doesn't mean what she says, or is one of your people to be talked out of her convictions, for she

isn't!" Suggest mildly that you have not opened your lips, and she will inform you in a scathing manner, "So much the better; for you are curiously mistaken if you think your having done so would have affected her in the least."

Then there was my Uncle Timothy, who always had a good idea in the way of slashing repartee when it was too late to make use of it; none of your mild witticisms, but a knock-you-down bit of sarcasm which would have silenced his opponent for all time. Nobody need be told that there are few fatalities more aggravating than this. When it happens to me, I sit down and gnash my teeth. Not so my Uncle Timothy. With exquisite ingenuity he straightway invented another situation, which would suit his repartee, and then gave the company a circumstantial account of the same, as if it had really happened; and nobody believed him, but every one went into fits of laughter, because the story was so beautifully invented; and my Uncle Timothy chuckled over it for a week after.

Then there was my Aunt Josephine, who always had one subject which engrossed all her thoughts, and which she dragged into every conversation; said subject being mostly the plot of the last novel which she had read, and which she in-

variably declared was "the *dee*-rest, *swee*-test book that had ever been printed."

Then there was my Uncle Jim, her brother, who had been a year or so in America, and spoke of that continent as "my country," and who on this particular evening remarked that the largest English oak would be considered "a bush over there" (with a jerk of his thumb, a not uncommon mode of denoting the Western Hemisphere). "I myself," he added, "took a leaf of one of our largest oaks to show them—*What* say, Molly?"

My mother had interposed with a question, which she repeated drily,—

"Why didn't you take the 'bush,' Jim?"

Needless to say the room echoed with laughter. As for the old doctor, he fairly writhed with merriment; then, striding across the room, and wringing my mother's hand, he said,—

"Blest if I ever heard anything neater than that, ma'am."

Uncle Jim looked rather small, and dropped the subject of "my country" for full five minutes.

Meanwhile, I have not mentioned my cousin Clem (full name, Clemence Mimpin), who was married for the second time, and always spoke of himself before his second spouse, as "an unfortunate man who had lost his wife." This possibly had

its origin in the self-effacing nature of his second wife, who rarely hazarded more than a mild "yes" or "no" in reply to any question addressed to her, and who, whenever she ventured a remark of her own, stopped in bewilderment before she reached what grammarians call the completion of the predicate, at which point my cousin Clem would come to the rescue and finish the sentence for her with double speed, repeating the remark to the company in general that he was an unfortunate man who had lost his wife.

To these may be added my maternal grandfather, who was stone-deaf, and of whom nobody took any notice excepting when, as every half-hour or so, he would start up with a string of monosyllabic questions:—

"Who? Why? What? Where? When?" and my grandmother, amid a curious crackling noise, would rise and scream in his ear,—*"No affair of yours!"* Whereupon he would sit down with Jack-in-the-box suddenness, and wait for another half-hour to pass.

The curious crackling noise alluded to was the result of my grandmother's eccentricity, which was wearing newspapers inside her dress, because, she said, "old bodies get the shivers, and there is

nothing like paper for keeping you warm, my dears."

Now fancy all these good people, besides one or two others of whom I shall have occasion to speak later, collected in the Wriggleys' front and back parlour, and me the infant studying them and their idiosyncrasies from my vantage point at the foot of the stairs.

Still Mr. Clutterby had not come. Accordingly cousins Peo and Teo (son and daughter of Uncle Timothy) were asked to give a duet, my mother advising expedition, since Mr. Clutterby couldn't abide music.

The baptismal names of these cousins were Peter and Letitia, but the English brain is skilled in inventing abbreviations. It was agreed in the family that Peter smacked of vulgarity, whereas Letitia was pretentious. Peo and Teo were neither, being short and simple, yet, it was thought, having a pretty Italian ring.

Peo was at this time a young spark of some two-and-twenty; Teo a maiden of eighteen. To see Peo and Teo playing a duet together was a thing not to be forgotten. Teo, seated the entire length of her arms from the piano, played as young ladies played forty years ago, very legato, with her

hands spread out like fans, and her head held pensively on one side, after the manner recommended by Leonardo da Vinci in his treatise on the beautiful. Peo, on the contrary, seated almost under the key-board, with his elbows sticking out half a yard behind him, played his quiet passages very staccato, *picking* out the notes; but what he prided himself on was his *con fuoco*, during the execution of which he would rise from his seat, appearing all the time in a sort of fit.

"What shall we play, Teo?" said Peo.

Teo reflected a moment, then she said,—

"Why, I think we might as well play 'Les Oiseaux,' Peo."

"What other duets do you know besides the 'Wasso'?" asked Uncle Buffer mischievously.

"Lor, Will'm, how coarse you are!" exclaimed my mother.

Then she turned to the young folks,—

"We all of us like the 'Wasso.' Play it, dears, and get it over."

"Have you brought it, Peo?"

"I think so, Teo."

And Peo, not to appear too ready to lay his hand on it, looked in his side-pockets.

"Look in your watch-pocket, my boy," said Uncle Buffer.

"Lor, Will'm!" exclaimed my mother again, "you do bring the blush to my cheek."

Then she turned to the lad,—

"It's sticking out of your coat-tail pocket, dear. Just give us the last page or so."

Uncle Taff, smiling, walked over to the window; and the doctor, with shoulders faintly trembling, bent over a book.

Then the playing began—at page *one*; both Peo and Teo having turned what is vulgarly called the bothered ear to my mother's delicate hint. The company listened in the good old-fashioned style, the young performers' mother, known in the family as Cousin Tish, to distinguish her from her daughter, Cousin Teo, counting, "One, *two-and-three*, four (very well taken, that octave, Teo!); *one-and-two*, three, four (don't lose your place, Peo)"—Aunt Sep and the other ladies marking the time with their knitting-needles, like so many German kapellmeisters, while a foot accompaniment was added by Uncle Buffer and all the gentlemen with the exception of Uncle Taff, who turned over the leaves and supplied a "hum" obligato.

Add to this that Bea sat howling in a corner, because Cousin Peo, of whom she was especially fond, looked on the verge of apoplexy; that Aunt Mabel, who knew not a note of music, with charac-



teristic contrariety said she didn't give much for your slap-dash, but would prefer a classical piece by Be-thofen. Uncle Jim clapped at the end of every page, and said it was almost as fine as anything he had heard in America. Grandpapa Buffer, being stone deaf, affected the intent listener, with his hand behind his ear, and unconsciously imitated first the facial contortions of Peo, then those of Teo. Grandmamma Buffer swayed herself to and fro, amid the curious crackling noise before alluded to, in an agony of fear that Peo would burst a blood-vessel; my father said "Ancore" at every pause in the music. My Uncle Timothy said it would be a good thing when the performers came to an "anchor," and then laughed so uproariously at his own joke that my mother requested him to go into the passage, which he did, and there sat down beside Bet and me on the stairs, and almost broke my tympanum with his shouts of merriment. My Aunt Josephine, the sentimentalist, wept with emotion at Teo's poetical solo-rendering of a page where Peo had lost his place. Cousin Clem, "the unfortunate man who had lost his wife," had to use his handkerchief loudly to hide the manly tear, which would start to his eyes, because SHE (*the* wife) had played so exactly like Teo. His ignored "second," feeling it incumbent on her to say something, turned to

Aunt Sep with the intention of saying how sweetly pretty the piece was, but, catching the eye of her husband, only gasped "Swee—" and Aunt Sep said "Very." And then, just as the performers' mother was saying "*two-and*," and just as the ladies had all their knitting-needles in the air, and the gentlemen had all their feet raised, and Uncle Taff was in the middle of a "hum," the piece came to an abrupt conclusion; whereupon there was a general kissing of the performers, all the aunts kissing Peo, and all the uncles kissing Teo; and Peo, like a chivalrous young fellow that he was, said Teo had played best, and Teo, like a bashful young maiden that she was, said, "Oh, indeed no! Peo played best." And Cousin Tish wept loudly into her handkerchief, because she said it was so "noble" of them, and made her so happy as their mother.

Then, the first performance being over, and the company having recovered from the exertion of all taking part in it, Cousin Euphemia (commonly called Cousin Peeny,) was asked to give a song.

Cousin Peeny, though what Germans would call "no more so young," was considered the belle of the family. She had been beautiful, and she had been young, and to the elders of the family, who had known her in the days of her beauty and youth, she never could be old or plain; as, indeed, people

are only old to those who never knew them when young, only plain to those who never knew them when pleasing. Cousin Peeny's voice was as much of the past as was her beauty, but breathless silence reigned while she sang, and the elders were pleased with the song, because it recalled their youth. And what opinion could Cousins Peo and Teo have on singing, or Phil, or the Infant, sitting on Bet's lap at the foot of the stairs? Softly the low, sweet voice, scarcely rising above a whisper, rang through the room, and the women passed their hands across their eyes, and the men sat with quiet looks, because anything is solemn that recalls their past to men and women—or was so forty years ago.

"Why, here's Mr. Clutterby!"

It was my mother speaking, as the last plaintive note of Cousin Peeny's song melted into silence, and a voice, like that of a man speaking into a jug, greeted the company.

"You'll take a seat on the sofa, Mr. Clutterby! Put a cushion to Mr. Clutterby's back, Phil. Bring Mr. Clutterby a footstool, Bea."

In return for all this attention Mr. Clutterby uttered a sound that was meant to be "Thank you," but which was remarkably like "Umph." Then he "settled" himself, carefully drawing his trousers at the knee, and giving a satisfied grunt, this time

distinctly "Umph." It was not, however, until he had requested that a window at his side might be shut, and that the canary might be taken out of the room, and had favoured every member of the company individually, and then the company *en masse*, with a look expressive of extreme nausea, that he relapsed into his wonted contemplation of the wall paper.

"An old friend of our family," whispered my mother to the doctor in her most impressive manner.

"Umph!" said Doctor Grimkey, a very unusual thing with him. At the same time he gave me a nod, Bet having rightly judged that now Mr. Clutterby had arrived, the party might be considered complete.

There is certainly nothing more agreeable than when your appearance in a drawing-room causes a whole company to burst into one beam of welcome; for, excepting two persons, every one in the room smiled, as, with my peculiarly pleasant little laugh, I made my entry on Bet's arm. The two exceptions, strange to say, were a grumpy old man and a sweet little maiden.

Opposite each other they sat, old Clutterby, with his eyebrows raised and his lips drawn down, hoping that horrible baby was not to be brought near him; little Bea, with her eyebrows raised and her lips

drawn down, hoping that horrible baby was not to be brought near *her*. Then—happy idea! thought worthy of Bea! Two against two! With a bound she jumped on to the knees of the grumpy old gentleman, and, putting one chubby arm round his neck, and laying one rosy cheek against his face, and letting her golden curls stream over his vest, with a wave of her other arm, signed to Bet and the infant to keep aloof, saying, with deep conviction, the very words of the grumpy old gentleman, with just a neat alteration,—

“Mind oo, *we* don’t like babies, and dislike their ways!”

Oh, little Bea!

Didn’t old Clutterby set her down roughly! Never mind. Did not some one else catch her up in his arms, and raising to his her rosy face, kiss the wondering blue eyes?

Some one who, like the infant named after him, spelt his name with an N.

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## PART VIII.

*The Mother of the Infant finds out that she hates hair.*

## I.

## PRESERVE US FROM HAIR!

IF there is one thing in which, more than another, you are fortunate as an infant, it is that, whatever you lack precisely happens to be what your mother would have wished you to lack, and whatever you have is the thing which, above all others, your mother would have wished you to have.

If your eyes are blue, dear me, how thankful she is that they are not brown! Between herself and you, what she never could abide in the baby next door are its goggley brown eyes. Not that the child can help it, poor thing! the fact is, brown eyes are always goggley.

If you have brown eyes, thank heaven for that! Just a word in your ear: what she always disliked in the baby over the way are its milk-and-watery

blue eyes. Not that the child can help it, of course! the fact is, blue eyes are always milk-and-watery.

If you have fair hair, her heart's desire is realized. To tell you her candid opinion concerning Isabel's baby, it would be well enough, as babies go, were it not for that mat of black hair.

If you have black hair, well, strange to say, you couldn't have hit her taste better. Fair hair, after all, is so commonish.

But the funniest thing of all is, when, by having *no* hair, you save your mother, as I did mine, from going "raving mad."

It was some time before the party above described, and one of my numerous aunts was on a visit with her infant, a month or so my senior. The scene which I am about to describe took place in my parents' bedroom.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning, and my father and mother were still dressing, when there came a knock at the door.

"Mabel's nurse, I suppose?" said my mother. "Open the door, keeping behind it, Erbet, and she can come in."

My father did as directed. Enter Aunt Mabel's nurse; my mother keeping one eye on her, and one on the door.

"Come with your baby, nurse? All right. (Erbet, squeeze yourself further back.) Put her in the cradle, nurse, here, beside Nobs."

Nurse, an elderly dame, did as directed, a smile playing about her lips as she looked from my mother to the door.

"What '*ussies* they all of them are!" exclaimed my mother, with much displeasure, when she had left the room, and my father stepped forth.

At this moment I was struck by a very curious picture which presented itself to my view, being the reflection of myself and baby May, as she was called, in a mirror facing my cradle. Baby May's head was covered with brown curls, mine was a shining sphere, as though made to a phrenologist's order. Anything more striking, and more to my disadvantage, than the contrast, can hardly be imagined. In fact, it was so galling to my vanity, that I was about to call for my hat, and, for the hundredth time, experienced the inconvenience of being able to do nothing of the kind, not having yet learnt to speak.

I could not but observe that my parents were equally impressed by the unfavourable contrast. As, though he had never before noticed the circumstance of my having no hair, my father cast a look of positive surprise at me; then, thinking, no doubt,



to please my mother—but, man-like, doing the wrong thing—he stepped over to me, and, finding I had three or four hairs, made them stand up. It was meant well, but must have made me look like a caricature anticipatory of the German Chancellor. I myself had difficulty in suppressing a smile, the more so as I saw that my father was perfectly serious. My mother, who was combing her own hair, looked at me with my four little bristles, then at baby May, then, dropping her comb and all her aspirates at once, she exclaimed,—

“ow I do ‘ate ‘air.”

“Eh, Molly, what’s the matter?” said my father, picking up the fragments of the comb.

“The matter?” cried my mother, tossing back her own hair angrily, “wy, simply, that my ‘air is all of a tangle. Thank ‘eavens, Nobs ‘as none. I don’t know what your feelings may be, Erbet; but, if *my* baby ‘ad a fuzz like baby May there, all over ‘is ‘ead, it would drive me raving mad!”

My father smiled; not a sarcastic smile, because his nature was too sweet for anything like sarcasm, and the tears were in my mother’s eyes as she spoke. He possibly thought the expression was rather strong, and that people were seldom driven “raving mad” so easily.

“I’m sure, Moll,” he said, “I shouldn’t like Nobs

to be different in any way from what he is. I dare-say I was just the same at his age; yet there was a time when I had hair enough; though now to be sure, it's getting rubbed off again."

"And a very good thing that, too, Erbet," said my mother, not sorry to draw the attention off me. "Nothing more respectable in a family-man than baldness; looks well in church, and keeps him from being eaten up with conceit."

So saying, she hurriedly fastened back her hair, and, seizing up baby May, led the way to the breakfast-room, saying, as she went,—

"Follow me with Nobs, Erbet. Good 'eavens! 'ere's a frizzle, enough to give the unfort'nate child a squint!"

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## PART IX.

*Traits Amiable and Unamiable in the Infant.*

## I.

## TRAITS AMIABLE AND UNAMIABLE IN THE INFANT.

No one can say that the infant is altogether unreasonable who has observed the indulgence which he extends to children. And here a comparison suggests itself between the infant and puss. Nothing you may have noticed more incenses puss than familiarities from grown-ups; on the other hand, it is a mistake to think she does not enjoy having her tail pulled by the children. As I write I have a puss in my mind, the puss of my own boyhood. . . .

There is pathos in these dots; alas! my boyhood and my puss are gone!

Nothing was there which more caused Clops (abbreviation of Cyclops, the name given her from the circumstance of her having only one eye) to bridle up than familiarities taken with her by either

of my parents; on the other hand, she doted on her boy-owner, whose favourite game it was to walk her round the room on her hind-legs in a "surplice." This, I fear, somewhat profanely, was the name given by me to the handkerchief tied about her neck, and which gave her, as I thought, a clerical appearance.

Had my parents attempted anything of the kind, she would have given notice to quit.

Yet another circumstance: you must have noticed that many children, from mistaken kindness, resent as "horribly cruel" the habit of lifting puss by the back of the neck. Such small persons (usually maidens) with the most good-natured intentions in the world, lift puss by the fore-leg. This must be excruciating pain; but puss, in deference to the absence of ill-will in the matter, bears it with stoical equanimity.

In all this behold a parallel case in the infant. There is, perhaps, no more curious error than to imagine that the healthy, good-tempered infant (of course there *are* curmudgeons among infants) does not enjoy being carried about by a sister four years his senior, who can barely toddle under the weight of him and four crippled dolls, while she gives desperate lunges all the time; and I, for one, would not give much for the infant who was never known

to enjoy being pulled up and down the nursery-floor by one leg, by some small sister, both puller and pulled being gloriously indifferent to the possibility of pins lying about. Show me the plucky infant who has any objection to a young lady of six seizing it by the arm, at the imminent risk of dislocating that limb. Where is the babe that does not shriek with delight at being "carried to London" on four tiny hands, which gradually bend until bearers and babe tumble down in a heap; and, after some dismal howling, cheer up, and decide to "do it again"? A baby with any fibre does not even oppose that curious game called "playing at papa and mamma," the invariable ending of which is that papa must tell mamma the baby is naughty, this affording "mamma" the opportunity of exerting what she considers her finest prerogative, and administering a "smacking" to baby with all the might of her chubby hands. After which howling and kissing and laughing again.

A mode of lifting the infant, popular with sisters and brothers of the mature age of nine or thereabouts, is to take a grip of its clothes, which, from their loose nature, immediately ride up, and form a string in the region of the shoulders. This does not look comfortable; but the infant smiles benignly. Brothers of ten have the fashion of carrying him in

a semi-perpendicular position, the feet being uppermost, with the result that the cherub turns black in the face. It commonly crows under these circumstances.

Part of the indulgence which the infant extends to children it also extends to gentlemen, especially those of what, for want of an equally expressive word, I must call the jolly type. A jolt on such a gentleman's foot, till the infant's inside is fairly churned, offers great charms; a ride on his head, with the prospect of brains being dashed out against the gasalier, is an ideal pleasure, inferior only to the paradisiacal delight of a hoist on the palm of his hand, which brings the infant into near contact with the ceiling, and finally, the infant who has not known what it is to be ridden round a room on the narrow knob of a gentleman's walking-stick may be considered to have known nothing of the bright side of life.

The conclusion which every one must draw is that the infant is easily satisfied, and will let you do pretty well what you like with it. Meanwhile, it is a mistake to think that the infant does not, like all easy-going folks, need a certain amount of management, for when in a rage it is apt to flare up in a manner which is the more terrifying that it is unexpected. I cannot too often repeat the asser-

tion that the infant is essentially humorous. Whatever you do, as long as it is done by way of a joke, the young man will shriek with laughter; but let a shade of petulance betray itself in your manner, and howls, long and loud, will betray you.

Of course there are times, too, when, like yourself, the infant is not up for fun. At such moments it enjoys a comfortable nursing; and, in connection with this circumstance, it is gratifying to know that, as by the ancient Egyptians, whose eyes were apt to give out, no man was so highly esteemed as a good oculist: so by the infant, ancient and modern, whose legs are apt to give in, no person is so highly esteemed as the one who makes a good nurse. This is the person he really respects.

Now a class of nurse which the infant dislikes more than any is that comprised of your timorous folk. These people insult a healthy specimen of the genus boy by lifting him up as if he were a piece of filagree work. It is they also who have the fashion of saying in a gasping voice,—

“How funny *and little* he is!”

This used to madden me, and I well remember how heartily I acquiesced in my mother's feelings on such occasions, which commonly found vent in the exclamation,—

"I'd like to 'little' *him*" (or *her*, as the case, or perhaps I should say, the gender, might be).

What my mother meant by "littling," of course, I cannot say to a certainty; but I do not hesitate to suggest that it was some mincing process, the pepper and salt not being spared.

This timorous class of persons is composed one-half of very young men, who place you on the extreme edge of their knees, and turn all the colours of the rainbow if a lady enters,—a thing which is extremely annoying to the infant; the other half of very young girls, the chief feature of whom is that their knees are extremely "spikey," and that they keep moving you from one knee to the other, thinking how awfully heavy you are. Being girls, however, they smile, and try to look happy, and if you are a boy with a scrap of gallantry in you, you will suppress your groans.

Another specimen of the timorous class is the elderly spinster, who takes you up as one does a lump of sugar, now that tongs are going out of fashion, trying not to seem gingerly, but all the same wishing for the tongs. The lady's lap is peculiarly slanting, and she wears a look of terror the whole time you are on it. If you are a bit of a wag, as I was, you will beam, curl your hand round her finger, and refuse to let it go.



The young mamma is a different type, but one which I held in almost as great dislike. This lady has the right knack of lifting you, and "can make a lap," two things which always impress the infant favourably. Supposing you are not her own infant, however, she is invariably struck with dismay after holding you for some five minutes, the reason of this being that she has discovered a pimple on your chin, the beginning of goodness only knows what infectious skin-disease; or she observed that your throat is flushed—

### MEASLES!

No sooner has she jumped to this conclusion than she jumps to her feet, suddenly remembers that she has an important engagement, thinks she had better not kiss "the darling" (meaning you), as she has "such a bad cold," kisses hands to you, while you sit howling where she has deposited you in all haste, says "you *are* a dear little sweet," and bustles off at double speed.

From the young mamma one naturally reverts to the elderly mamma. This person holds you as if she had never done anything in her life but hold babies, and is so deliciously "cushiony" that you instinctively cuddle up to her; and, though the thing has happened over and over again, are always

somehow surprised that the moment your mother disappears, she commences an elaborate study of every item of clothes you have on, an act which the more incenses you as the survey is almost invariably accompanied by a running commentary as follows:—

“Don’t think much of this material—linen decidedly coarse—cheap flannel—well, I never! and this frightful embroidery!”

If you be an infant such as I was, with—besides a turn for the humorous—a fine vein of sarcasm, you will smile a cynical smile, when same lady on your mother’s return exclaims, in a voice of rapture,—

“You *must* excuse me, Mrs. Wriggley, but I cannot help admiring your baby’s ex—quisite dress.”

There is but one more aversion of the infant’s in the way of ladies whom I think it worth while to describe. This person, who may be old or young, married or single, takes you up as if you were a small King Charles, deposits you on her lap, *pats* you, and then, labouring under the extraordinary delusion that you will remain perfectly quiet, talks over your head to her *vis-à-vis*. I remember the first time this happened to me, I could hardly believe my eyes or ears; for not only did the lady in question not look at me, but I was positively not the subject of her conversation. Now being an ex-

tremely rational infant, slow to anger, willing, like a true Briton, to claim my rights first quietly, and reserve turning up my shirt-sleeves for a last resource, I directed a mild gaze of inquiry to this lady (Bobbins was her name), as much as to say,—

“I should be glad to know, madam, if my ears deceive me, but it strikes me there is here a debate going on of which I am not the leading subject.”

Mrs. Bobbins took no more notice of my inquiring gaze than if puss’ on the hearth-rug had raised to hers his green orbs.

Then it was that I made for my shirt-sleeves and found—I had none. Well, excepting the possible case of a general making for his sword, to rush upon the enemy, and finding that his two arms have been shot off, I can imagine no position more peculiar than that of a respectable son of Albion who makes for his shirt-sleeves, with intent to turn them up, and finds—he has none. I confess I collapsed, and even when the belligerent instinct fired me again, it was of a miserable species. It had been my intention when I had turned up my shirt-sleeves to punch Mrs. Bobbins; finding I had no shirt-sleeves to turn up, I resigned myself to giving one impotent kick, then began wriggling, howling, and slipping, till I finally landed on the floor with a crash.

My mother picked me up.

"The darling," she said, smiling, "cannot bear one to talk or think of any one besides him. Babies are always like that, you know."

Mrs. Bobbins was lost in contemplation of a landscape over the mantelpiece. She said nothing. Very strange sort of person this to the infant.

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## PART X.

*The Infant's Nose and Ears give rise to Marvellous Complications.*

## I.

## THE FLAW IN THE GEM.

A SORRY ignoramus must he have been who invented the proverb, "Tis well to let the well alone." Had he but learnt the rudiments of grammar, he would have known that the well admits of three degrees of comparison, the well, the better, and the best, a fact which was well known to my mother, though she certainly owed the knowledge to no grammarian. Indeed, she cared not a straw for grammar, and it is casting no aspersion on her memory to mention the fact. Did not Pope Gregory the Great say, "*I disdain to observe the cases of the prepositions?*" and why, if one of the wisest of Pontiffs should disdain to observe the cases of the prepositions, like a man of spirit that he was, why should not the mother of Nobs Wriggley scorn to

observe the rules laid down by Murray's predecessors?

Had you gone to her and told her as a bit of grammar, that "the beautiful," being compared, results in the "more" and "most" beautiful, she would probably have asked you to carry your scraps of Latin elsewhere. Without ever having learnt to compare adjectives, it was patent to her before the infant was a month old, that the beautiful, as illustrated in him, might be transformed into the more, the most beautiful.

As Southey says in a well-known poem,—

"It was summer's evening."

My mother was sitting gazing at me with the expression of admiration commonly worn by her and my father, and, in their presence, by honest Bet, as often as they were brought face to face with my charms. Suddenly she bent over me, and I, gifted as I was with the discernment which, as I have before said, properly belongs to the infant-in-arms, read the unspoken thought—her baby was beautiful, yes; but he might be more, he might be *most* beautiful; he might be the loveliest of living babes, if—here she put the thoughts in words—"if his dear little nose were not quite so upturned, and his sweet little ear were more curled at the tip."

These were the flaws in the gem.

At first a mere passing fancy, I could see how this idea took firmer and firmer hold of her, as an idea does, until it swells to a mighty conviction. Dozens the instances which I might cite in proof of this from history, past and present; to mention only one in contemporary politics—but no, if besides Pope Gregory the Great, I bring contemporary politics to bear on this simple narrative of Mrs. Wriggley, I shall be set down as a pedant. And indeed, too much of this sort of thing is apt enough to remind one of the old woman whose pig would not get over the stile, and so she could not get home that night.

My mother sighed, and looked at me again. By this time I could see that my nose, which at first had seemed to her barely tilted, had begun to assume in her eyes a fearful appearance. In a word it had grown a deformity. As for my ears, which at first had seemed but a trifle straight, they had become monstrosities.

She paced the room; then, as I knew she would, took down the "Guide to Mothers."

What indeed is in a name? The "Guide" contained nothing with regard to up-turned noses, not a syllable with regard to ears straight at the tip.

She took down "Shakespeare," this doubtless in

sheer absence of mind; for she was not one of those people who believe that the works of the great dramatist form a kind of "Enquire Within upon Everything," and may be used as a book of reference on any subject. In fact, she despised all literature in verse, and was wont to say that she did not give much for your thoughts "set dancing and prancing in poetry." Accordingly, returning the book to the shelf, with a muttered "Lor, what stuff do get printed!" she sat down again beside the infant.

My father returned shortly afterwards and took his wonted seat opposite her at the foot of the cradle. There was silence for a moment, then my mother said, "Turn your head a little, Erbet."

My father did so.

"A little more, dear."

"Bless me, Molly," said my father, with the natural nervousness which comes over a man who is made the object of sudden solemn contemplation, "What is the matter? Have I a spider on me?"

My mother looked at him, and spoke not. My father was a bashful man; this steady gaze disconcerted him. He drew his chair further back.

My mother drew hers further forward.

He further back again.

She further forward.



This continued until he knocked against the wall.

Then he made a screen of his newspaper, opening it out in front of him.

My mother rose and placed herself at his side.

"What the *dooce* Molly," he exclaimed, fairly roused, and using uncommonly strong language for him, "what the *dooce* do you mean?"

"I wish, Erbet," replied my mother frigidly, "that you would not insult your wife by breaking the Ten Commandments in her presence."

My father, wroth as he was, smiled. He then continued reading his newspaper, my mother continuing to gaze at him calmly, much as the artist gazes at his model when, with pencil poised in the orthodox manner, he takes his proportions.

The shades were beginning to set in. My father, giving his chair a sudden jerk sideways, evidently hoped to escape the vigilant gaze. My mother quietly followed him, saying as she did so,—

"I believe, Erbet, there is no *statoole* which pro'ibits a wife to sit beside 'er 'usband."

Then she fell anew to studying his profile, muttering aloud,—

"A little more, and it would certainly be a deformity."

My father fell to humming the national anthem.

The darkness increased.

"I must call for a lamp." (Speaker—my mother.)

"If you do, I shall put it out." (Speaker—my father.)

"Goodness me, what a temper you have, Erbet!"

Perhaps there was never a man who had a sweeter temper, which made it the more extraordinary that when it was roused, my mother invariably collapsed.

They sat on in silence, until my mother, uttering her thoughts aloud, as she always did when they weighed on her, said, "I wish I could see his ear."

My father became more than ever immersed in the perusal of his paper, which was odd, for the darkness was illumined by only one thin ray of light cast by a lamp in the street.

A moment after, by said ray I saw my mother slowly raise her hand, and feel my father's ear.

He sprang to his feet.

"Am I to understand, Molly, that you have gone stark-staring mad?"

My mother drew herself up.

"I believe, Mr. Wiggley, that there is no statute which prohibits a wife to feel 'er 'usband's ear, and I presoom she may do so without being mad; but, of course, Mr. Wiggley, you can understand what you like."

Having said this with great majesty, she left the room, but not before, as usual, she had dropped her thought, and in a voice loud enough for the infant to hear,—

“It *has* got a curl at the tip.”

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## II.

## THE INFANT'S FATHER IN A FALSE LIGHT.

No sooner had my mother left the room than my father lighted a candle, and went to the mirror. He was not in a general way an inordinately vain man, though, like most mortals who have a bit of sunshine in their hearts, he was not for cavilling with his own face and form which, on the whole, struck him as pleasing. This might be seen in the smile which he would bestow on the reflection of himself of a Sunday morning before starting for church; not an inane smirk, but a cheery look of pleasure, which said, if you cared to put it into words, "On the whole, I know few men who pay better for the dressing."

Whereupon he would sally forth with my mother on his arm, his prayer-book in one hand and switching his cane with the other, until the sight of the steeple made him pull up like a Prussian.

To such a man it could but be far from pleasant to learn from his wife's soliloquy that some feature in his face suddenly presented the appear-

ance of "almost a deformity," and such a deformity that it held said lady's gaze fascinated as by some horrible spell.

Accordingly, as already mentioned, finding himself alone, he hastened to light a candle. This done, he studied the corresponding side of his profile. Apparently it presented no new features to him.

He took the candle in his *left* hand, and studied his left side-face. Result the same.

It was not a Grecian profile, nor could it, strictly speaking, be called Roman. Taking the head in its *tout-ensemble*, it was a very ordinary type. The forehead, stretching back to the bump of veneration, was rather what art-critics would call "shouting," the nose was of the species named "pug," and the mouth was not what your lovers of beauty style "chiselled."

Could my mother have suddenly discovered that he did not answer her ideal of beauty? Pooh! I could see how he put the thought from him. A woman is not married for nearly two years to find out only then that nature has not formed her husband on the pattern of Apollo Belvedere. When at the expiration of that time she takes to staring at him with a weird look in her eyes, it is plain that nature must have played some sudden prank with

him, such as she does when she suffers the hair to turn white in a single night.

My father, with unusual extravagance, lighted the second candle which was only placed on the table for the sake of symmetry, and placing one candle on each side of the mirror, drew a chair and seated himself in front of the toilet table, then, leaning forward, relapsed into the solemn contemplation of his face.

Now, seen only by the infant, there had stood in the doorway during all these operations, Bet, her face presenting an interesting combination of the most varied emotions. These finally found vent in the shape of one word, and that a monosyllable, but which by reason of extraordinary elongation of the vowel (the plan no doubt, adopted in China) spoke volumes:—

“Lor!”

My father turned round.

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## III.

## FURTHER MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

A FEATURE which I always respected in my father was that, however he might collapse before my mother,—before no other mortal, woman or man, did he, whatever the predicament, lose his habitually *dégaré* manner.

To take the case in point. To be caught staring at one's own physiognomy by the light of two candles, one placed at each side of one's head, could hardly be pleasant. There are few men living, I suppose, who have found themselves in the same predicament, though there are some men living, I daresay, who, when they think themselves alone, run their hands into their hair, or give their moustaches a twirl, or study a pose of the foot. Of course there are also men living who are superior to this: there was a Sage at Chelsea. Meanwhile your ordinary man, who is not a sage, who rather pooh-poohs the idea of sages, and who, in a general way, is not superior to the follies above-named (if follies you like to call them), even he objects to being "caught" as

was my father; and, for my own part, I confess that in this I sympathize with him, and can fancy few positions more unpleasant than that of the man who, thinking himself unnoticed at your evening party, falls to studying a pose which will set off to best advantage his patent leather footgear, and, on looking up, meets the gaze of some one else, while some one else's voice, which is soft and sweet, yet has a ripple of laughter in it, says, making use of the old greeting, yet, under the circumstances, horribly suggestive:—

*So glad to see you!*

It was no such voice that showed my father the absurdity of his position, but a voice such as commonly met with in that class called by old Richardson "the vulgar many." Yet it was plain to me that with all his would-seem ease, my father felt a little taken aback at finding himself discovered in this deep contemplation of his own features.

"What do you want, my girl?" he said somewhat testily.

"Want?" exclaimed Bet in the tone of righteous indignation ever at the command of the British hand-maiden, and looking at the "dips" sputtering on the table, "Want? Since when is a nuss *criminal* for lookin' arter her baby, and its eyes bunt out of



its 'ead with an illoomination as 'ud flare up a chutch?"

My father was evidently not listening to her, a sudden thought having struck him.

"Perhaps she can see what it is," he muttered. Then, taking in each hand a candle, he approached her solemnly,—

"Do you see anything in my face, Bet?"

Instead of answering him, Bet looked somewhat uneasily at the open door. It doubtless struck her that this was not exactly the kind of thing "the missis" would approve of; and, very wisely, she had no intention of breaking with her "missis."

"Look at me," repeated my father solemnly.

Bet's cheek dimpled as she obeyed him, but from some distance.

"Closer, my good girl," said *Pater meus* earnestly.

"Lor, sir," said Bet, with dignity, "I knows my place."

My father looked at her, then exclaimed with some impatience,—

"I see you mistake my meaning."

"I do no sich thing, sir," replied Bet, in a tone this time distinctly between a simper and reproach, and which made my father pound down the candles; "but I respecks myself, sir, and the Hinfant there,

and I aint a-goin' to make a ranty-view of the sakerd nussery."

"Good heavens! Leave the room!" roared my father.

Never surely did infant's nose and ears give rise to such unhappy complications.

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## IV.

## A CHAPTER OF QUESTIONS.

As I gathered from a conversation which took place between Bet and Nancy later, my parents had not again spoken to each other after the somewhat stormy conjugal *181e-à-181e* described two chapters back. This accounts for the fact that the conversation on the following morning commenced much where it had then ended. I saw with some surprise that my father's manner was gentler than even usual with him.

They had only just waked, when my mother, propping her arm on her pillow, said,—

"Tell me, Erbet, can you remember what sort of noses your parents had?"

"Well, yes; my mother's was turned-up, like mine; my father's was as straight as Nobs's."

My mother smiled sadly. Why rob him of his delusion? It was a custom of my father's to make the infant his standard, whatever the subject under debate. Had he been asked at this time (I being a

month old) was Uncle Buffer tall, he would probably have said,—

“Why, yes, as fine a man as Nobs there.”

Not in fun; bless you, no! Had he caught your smile, he would have added,—

“That is, I mean, as Nobs there—will be.”

“His mother had it,” muttered my mother. “It’s in the family, then.”

“What do you say, dear?”

“Nothing. Tell me, Erbet, was your mother’s nose as turned-up as yours?”

Now my father had himself called his nose turned-up, but when you come to think of it, it is quite a different thing to call your nose “turned-up” yourself, and to hear somebody else call it turned-up, which subtle difference it is that has given rise to every war, domestic and political, that ever was fought.

“Bless me,” said my father tartly, “I never measured the precise angle of my mother’s or my nose, Molly.”

After this there was silence as before. Then my mother, changing her tactics, said,—

“You have such nice ears, Erbet.”

My father did not even smile. In a general way he was as susceptible to blandishments as any man living; but the nature of this compliment was

such as to startle rather than please him. If ever an eye said, "Am I mad, or are you mad, or are all of us mad together?" it was his eye.

My mother proceeded,—

"Do you remember, Erbet, what sort of ears your parents had?" Clearly she was mad on the subject of noses and ears. My father turned round. I thought he was going to be vehement, but instead he said gently,—

"No, I don't think I do." Then, before she had time to put another question, he continued, "Molly, have you suffered from headache lately?"

"Goodness me, no, Erbet?"

"Or do you have bad dreams?"

"Why, yes, sometimes."

"Don't that give you a queer feeling in your head?"

"A queer feeling! What *do* you mean, Erbet?"

It was plain my father dreaded a paroxysm. He replied evasively that he got dazed himself sometimes; then, quickly changing the subject, remembered that it was eight o'clock already, and that he must make haste and get dressed.

My mother had fallen into a reverie.

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## V.

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

I WAS not surprised at my mother's returning to the bedroom when my father had left for business, but I *was* surprised when, after gazing at me for some time, she bent forward, and deliberately and firmly, taking the tip of my nose between the finger and thumb of one hand, took the tip of my ear, laid in a fold, between the finger and thumb of her other hand, and remained in this position till I had screamed myself to sleep. This was continued every day for a week, the ears being taken turn about,—while, alas! I had but one nose.

Every day I screamed myself to sleep; every day I woke to find my nose and one ear still in the maternal grasp. I must say she seemed moved at my pitiful moaning; but this, considering it in no way alleviated the pain, had much the same effect on me as the assurance with which in later years she was wont to accompany every thrashing that she thought fit to administer to me, namely, that it hurt her quite as much as it hurt me. This state-

ment repeated between every third or fourth well-aimed stroke formed a point on which I always had my doubts, and which caused me once, being in extreme bodily anguish, to bawl out,—

“Then let’s change places!”

A remark which caused my mother to come to a sudden full stop, with the birch dramatically raised, while my father left the room, using his handkerchief violently.

But to return to the subject in hand. Towards the end of the unhappy week in question, I noticed my father stop a couple of times beside my cradle, and look at me with a somewhat startled expression.

The fact is, I myself had begun to notice in a mirror opposite, that my ears, but more especially my nose, having passed from white to rose-pink, had become, first red, then blue, then, passing through the usual tints of ultramarine and violet, had finally settled down into that rich and beautiful tint known as royal purple. Add to this that all colour had left my cheeks, and it will be understood what a curious and, alas! dissipated appearance I offered. Well might a man of my father’s strictly temperate habits, and with a complexion to correspond, well might such a man start to

behold the pallid cheeks and purple nose of his only son.

"Molly," he said at last, "I fear Nobs is not well. His complexion is so odd, and—he breathes so heavily."

"So he does!" exclaimed my mother, bending over me, with a look of sudden fear. "So he does—Oh, Erbet—if I've killed him!"

"Killed him? What can you mean, Molly?" said my father, in a sepulchral voice, and turning white, as he almost fell back against the mantel-piece; then, as a bottle fell from it, he darted forward, and seizing both my mother's hands, exclaimed,—

"Heavens, Molly, you haven't given him something wrong by mistake? You haven't—couldn't—you didn't, dear, given him a dose of hair-wash in mistake for the soothing-syrup?"

My mother dropped into a chair.

"No, no; I—I was only trying to straighten his nose, and—to curl the tip of his ear."

"Heavens! with what?"

As he spoke, my father looked round the room as if he expected to see the smoothing-iron and curling-tongs.

"Only—only with my hands, Erbet! *I've been pinching him for the last week.*"



"Oh, Molly! you absurd Molly!"

Two days afterwards my skin had somewhat regained its natural hue. Three days afterwards the temporary feverishness, the result of eight days' systematic pinching, had passed away. Four days afterwards my mother had, to all appearances, grown resigned to my nose having an upward bent, and my ear having no curl at the tip. Five days afterwards she dropped the remark that she was truly thankful her baby had not one of your long, sheepish noses, and ears a mass of quirks and crinkles.

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## PART XL

*The Baby-hater, Conspiracies, and other Matters.*

## I.

## A MONSTER BABY-HATER.

IN connection with this narrative of my infancy, I have already had occasion to mention a gentleman rejoicing in the euphonious name of Clutterby, and whose amiable watchword was,—

*“Mind you, I don’t like children, and dislike their ways.”*

What Mr. Clutterby meant by the “ways” of children, I believe no one has ever known, but this I will venture to say, that I, for one, have a very distinct notion of what the children meant by the “ways” of Mr. Clutterby when they set up as a counter-maxim,—

*“Mind you, we don’t like Mr. Clutterby, and dislike his ways.”*

To one of his “ways” I myself fell a victim at the age of six months and three days. This, it

will be remembered, was some days after a certain family-gathering, described under heading the "Do," some chapters back. Mr. Clutterby's visit three days after this entertainment was, of course, in deference to the custom which exacts that a party be followed by a party-call.

Now this day happening to be a bank-holiday, I had just been dressed to "go visiting" with my parents, and, in accordance with our family custom on these occasions, had been seated in state in the front parlour. Here my parents were to join me as soon as they were ready, it being our fashion—though we otherwise sat in the bedroom or back-parlour—when dressed to "go visiting," to seat ourselves solemnly amid the grandeur of our front-parlour for some time before starting. This, my mother said, made us behave more genteelly when we were out, especially my father, who, she added with a sigh, was so apt to be "plebby."

To him my mother usually gave some parting directions, while we thus sat in state, such as, to talk of the shop as the "office," not to use his handkerchief so loudly, to speak of Nobs as "our son," not to look as if he sat on pins, to reserve politics for the gentlemen, not to refer to her in a case of scraps of Latin, not to be "coarse" in the way of joking, and with the ladies to remember that

he was a married man, and that his wife had her eye on him.

It was, as has been said, in accordance with this custom, that I found myself seated in state on the front-parlour sofa on the day of Mr. Clutterby's party-call.

"If you'll jus' step in here, sir, the missis 'll be down at once," said Bet, as she flung the door open, then closed it again, leaving Mr. Clutterby and me facing each other.

"*That* horror here!" ejaculated Mr. Clutterby, by way of a pleasant greeting.

Politeness, combined with the circumstance that I had not yet learnt to speak, prevented me from replying with a similar salutation.

Then it was that Mr. Clutterby gave me the painful illustration of his "ways," to which I have alluded; that is to say, he made one dart forward and *pinched* me; then retired, rubbing his hands, and muttering,—

"Well done! That's the tenth baby I've pinched this week!"

Incredible as it seems, this monster baby-hater *pinched every baby with whom he came in contact.*

It would be insulting the reader's understanding to say I screamed. To my surprise and anguish neither my mother nor Bet came; my mother,

doubtless, thinking that Bet was with me, and *vice versa*. I looked again at Mr. Clutterby with my mouth open, ready to give one long scream. Mr. Clutterby looked at me with his mouth open ready to pronounce one short benediction, when the smallest thing imaginable caused us to simultaneously—pause.

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## II.

## THE BABY-HATER CAUGHT.

If there is one sentence which aggravates me more than another in a book, it is that with which some writers break off at the most exciting part of their story:—

“We leave the rest to the reader’s imagination;”—or this other, with which they shirk an attempt at describing the hero in a moment of intense interest: “It will be easier for the reader to imagine than it would be for us to depict, the expression of Augustus at this totally unexpected turn of affairs.”

For my part, aware though I am that the reader is dying for the solution of the mystery hinted at in the close of last chapter, where we left Mr. Clutterby and the infant in a state of open-mouthed surprise, yet, previous to raising the veil from that mystery, I feel it is my duty in some words to convey an idea of the kind of expression which it was that settled on the face of that arrant old rascal, Clutterby. Not that I dare hope that I can

in any way reproduce it to the life. As Mr. Ruskin has doubtless discovered in his artistic researches, and made known to his countrymen, the gist of that immortal contribution to art-literature, Lessing's "Laokoon," is in plain English this, that we can paint the "little star," but cannot paint the "twinkle, twinkle."

So with all attempts to depict the human face.

Meanwhile, I suppose, it is not jumping at too rash a conclusion if I take it for granted that you, at some time of your existence, have had the feeling as if your head had popped off your shoulders. This is an indication of exceedingly strong emotion, mostly produced by amazement, and the expression your face wears, while you labour under said feeling, is exactly that which was worn by the face of Mr. Clutterby at the close of last chapter. He sat mute with astonishment, with, it was evident, the feeling all the time as if his head were under his chair, the reason of this being that—hardly had the second-hand of the clock on the mantel-piece described one-half of the circle which it runs at a breathless pace to keep time with the minute-hand, when the silence of the room was broken by a low silvery sound.

This was what caused the peculiar change of expression in the face of Mr. Clutterby.

The sound was repeated.

"Lord bless my soul!" exclaimed the baby-hater, putting his hand to his head, and feeling, apparently to his relief, that it was still on his shoulders. Then he started to his feet, and looked at me with a note of interrogation in either eye; but as I, with perfect spontaneity, returned his gaze with a note of exclamation in either eye, he saw that I was as much in the dark as himself.

A third time the sound was repeated.

The first time it had been like one little silver bell, the second time it was like six little silver bells, the third time it was like a dozen little silver bells ringing all at once.

"Lord bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Clutterby a second time.

"Then—yes, certainly, it came from underneath that table—he put on his spectacles—he lifted up a corner of the cloth, and there behold, instead of a dozen little bells, *one* little belle—naughty, wicked little Bea, sitting on the floor, with her socks all in crinkles, her dress all in wrinkles, and her eyes all in twinkles, and—says Miss Bea, witching, golden-haired Miss Bea, smiling at the gentleman in the spectacles,—

"Bea *like* oo; oo pinch baby-boy!"



## III.

"OH, IMMY, YOU'RE IN FOR IT NOW!"

NEVER, I believe, did a gentleman look more disconcerted on receiving from a lady a frank declaration of her affectionate esteem than did Mr. Clutterby on being favoured with this flattering announcement from my Cousin Bea. In the excess of his delight, and believing himself alone, he had boasted aloud that he had pinched ten babies that week—as it now turned out in the hearing of the "pert little gal." Thinking himself unseen, he had pinched the tenth baby with all his might, and lo, the "pert little gal" had been peering from under the table-cloth.

Mr. Clutterby called himself a city man. The term is rather vague, but it is generally understood to suggest an office in the heart of the metropolis (nothing so vulgar as a shop), goodish income, and—*great respectability*.

For such a man to be convicted of pinching babies (and Mr. Clutterby was far too respectable, if put on oath, to deny the charge) was a prospect

awful to contemplate. Yet here was the "pert little gal" in his secret. How keep her quiet? A word to the mother of the infant, and who could answer that she would not have him arrested on a charge of assaulting her cherub, and making a practice of so treating defenceless babes? These were the thoughts which it was easy to trace on the face of the unhappy man, as he wiped the drops of cold perspiration from his brow.

Meanwhile Bea, in her shrill little voice, and pressing together her finger and thumb in weird imitation of the monster, repeated the statement which she had before made,—

"Bea *like* oo; oo pinch baby-boy."

Then it was that the infant first saw to what abject measures a city man may be reduced. The children-hater, assuming the ghost of a smile, said,—

"Er—what is your name, my dear?"

"Bea," was the prompt reply.

"I want all the letters, my dear," observed in his would-be blandest tones the ogre, thinking, no doubt, what a pert little imp she was to put him off with an initial.

Bea looked at him as if she were not quite sure that he was in his right mind, then she said, with some coldness,—

"All the letters are Beatrice."

"Ah, indeed; well, Beatrice," said the ogre, trying his best to smile pleasantly, but almost obliged to give up the attempt (it is wonderful how hard it is to smile when you have not done so for twenty years). "I was going to say, Beatrice—Lord bless my soul, what's she crying for?"

By dint of putting her two fists into her eyes and rubbing them with all her might, Bea had succeeded in distilling, after the approved juvenile method, two murky little tears, and, with a vast deal of sobbing, informed Mr. Clutterby that she was only "Beatrice" when she was naughty; otherwise she was Bea.

"Lord help us!" exclaimed that individual, fairly bewildered. Then, wiping away the two murky little tears with his yellow silk handkerchief, he said,—

"B." (It was evident he could not think of the name as anything but an initial, and was mentally fuming at this idiotcy of parents, calling their children by the letters of the alphabet. "B, can you keep a secret?"

Bea rather thought she could.

Mr. Clutterby took her on his left knee.

"Oo like Bea," remarked the young lady complacently.

"Yes, my dear," replied the ogre, holding her

at arms' length, wondering apparently were all little girls so amorous, and gazing with horror at the damage which her dusty little shoes were inflicting on his inexpressibles. Then he said, speaking very slowly, so as not to confuse her small brain,—

"It will be *our* secret, my dear—a secret between little B. and Mr. C."

He thought, no doubt, this would please her, from the honour attached to initials. It was pitiable to see the monster reduced to this.

"Who is Mr. C.?" asked the small lady, in a matter-of-fact way that was, to say the least, discouraging.

The ogre looked as if he would like to annihilate her on the spot, but he said meekly,—

"That's me, my dear; and the secret is that you must tell no one that I pinched the baby."

"Oo pinched ten babies," observed Bea.

Mr. Clutterby coughed; then said,—

"Yes, my dear, ten naughty babies."

"All babies naughty," replied Bea, airing her favourite theory. Then, with a little note of interrogation in her voice, "Oo pinch all babies?"

Mr. Clutterby coughed again, and, ignoring the question, said,—

"B. must tell no one that Mr. Clutterby pinched babies. B. must promise not to, and then Mr.

Clutterby will give B. anything she likes. What would you like, B.?"

If she had bargained for a hundreds pounds he would doubtless have given her a cheque on the spot. He looked surprised when she said, after mature reflection,—

"Big orange."

"If you promise to keep Mr. Clutterby's secret, you shall have it, my dear, next Sunday."

It was an understood thing that Mr. Clutterby might drop in any Sunday, which day Bea\* and her parents spent with the infant's parents.

"You will promise to keep Mr. Clutterby's secret, my dear?"

Bea nodded—a determined little nod which there was no mistaking. Then she formed a globe with her two little hands joined at the finger-tips and wrists, and said,—

"So big orange?"

"Bigger," said Mr. Clutterby, and joined his hands as she had done. "So big."

Hereupon the amorous little girl threw both arms round his neck and kissed him, and Mr. Clutterby, thinking perhaps that this was a sealing of her promise, and at all events not daring, under the circumstances, to put her from him, as he had done on a previous occasion, anxious indeed to propitiate

her to the utmost of his power, after a moment's hesitation with much squeamishness kissed her on her forehead with the extreme tips of his lips.

"Oo like Bea," repeated the small maiden, apparently gratified in no slight degree at this her latest conquest. Then her golden curls all crumpled, she toddled away.

No elderly gentleman caught impressing a kiss on the lips of sweet eighteen, could have looked more confused than did that respectable city man, Mr. Clutterby, as in almost the same moment the door opened and admitted Mrs. Wriggley, mother of the infant, and Mrs. Wriggley, mother of the amorous little girl, and when the latter small person, regardless of all the laws of propriety, even in the presence of the two mothers, stopped on the threshold of the door, and cast an unmistakable smile at the ogre, nay, put the tips of her fingers to her cherry lips and threw a parting kiss at him, that respectable man coughed twice, with mingled horror and agitation, and said for the fourth time, in a voice audible to the infant,—

"Lord bless my soul!"

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## IV.

## END OF THE FEUD.

I CONFESS I waited with no small curiosity for the events of the coming Sunday. It came at last, bringing with it Bea, her parents, and Mr. Clutterby. It is perhaps needless to say that the latter gentleman did not produce the orange at once. On the other hand, a young lady brought up in the way she should go—and the Wriggleys prided themselves on their bringing-up of their children—could not of course remind a gentleman of his promise. Nevertheless Bea's little eye was riveted with a semi-questioning gaze on Mr. Clutterby during the first half-hour or so of his visit, and she once or twice formed her hands into the shape of a globe. Beyond that she did not go in the way of reminders, excepting you choose to regard as such the occasional nods and smiles, with a we-know-what-we-know sort of expression with which she favoured that gentleman, and which were apparently little short of distracting to him. Fancy yourself an elderly city man, with a horror of children, and

strict notions as to the keeping of Sunday,—placed suddenly opposite a small daughter of Eve, who has not a shadow of regard for your orthodox notions, and who, while you sit with your Sunday face, twice as grim and twice as glum as your weekday face, claims kindred-spiritship with you, and finally, when dinner is announced, slips into yours an absurd little hand, and trots off with you with an air that says to the company in general,—

“Bless you, Clutterby and I are old pals!”

Now, whether it be that habit softens the sting of this sort of thing, or that Bea was an arch-conjuror, I know not; but as Sunday after Sunday flew by, every one bringing with it Bea and Mr. Clutterby, it seemed to me that the old man was resigning himself to his fate with more and more grace. He positively seemed to like the feel of the tiny hand slipped into his; I almost think he ceased to mind the kisses of the amorous little girl; and when at last Bea’s birthday came, and the infant did the handsome thing and presented her with the loveliest doll imaginable, lo and behold, the monster sheer outdid him; for he presented Bea with a doll the charms of which beggar description, and which consequently cannot be imagined—a doll that could walk and talk,—a doll that had been ordered from Paris.



And what, think you, said Miss Bea, as she stood with one doll on each arm? Looking up at the children-hater, whom by slow degrees she had made to love her, said Miss Bea,—

“One doll from oo, and one doll from” (here she lowered her golden head, and a blush crept all over her face) “one doll from—baby-boy. *Him good.*”

It was the greatest concession she had ever made; it was noble; it was grand! But Bea went further. Putting down the two dolls, and looking up at the grim old city man, she said, with a burst of magnanimity worthy of herself, and flourishing one tiny arm,—

“Clutterby, we will love the baby-boy. WE were babies!”

Was the baby-hater converted? Did he catch her in his arms? Did he say that she was wiser than all preachers? . . or did the infant dream all this?

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## PART XII.

*The Infant in its Relation to Smiles, a Recollection  
giving Rise to a Railway Journey.*

## I.

## A CURIOUS RESOLUTION OF THE INFANT.

THERE is a large class of persons who, I believe, labour under the delusion that the infant forms no definite resolutions. Now, from my own recollection, I am able to state that, before the age of twelve months, I formed a very peculiar one, namely, that if all the world chose to smile at me, I was not going to smile at all the world.

I was not a haughty infant, but, as I remember saying to myself, somewhat impatiently, "Enough is as good as a feast, and life is not worth living, if one has to keep on grinning from morning till night."

In partial excuse for the people that thus "bothered" me, I will say that I certainly was a taking infant. My face had that spherical form

so peculiarly cherubic; I had a sparkling eye, what ladies call "a dear little, queer little" nose, and a mouth which, do what I would, was always in the shape of an O, this latter circumstance, perhaps more than anything, giving my face an unspeakably jovial expression. Add to this, that any one who had ever heard me chuckle, found me for ever after irresistible.

I never passed the house next door but the whole family—Yabsley was their name, and there were six of them: old Mr. Yabsley, young Mr. Yabsley, Mrs. and the three Miss Yabsleys—smiled singly or collectively; the spinster-lady next door but one, ditto; the old gentleman next door but two, ditto; the old lady over the way, ditto; ditto all the little girls in the row; ditto all the young ladies; ditto the coal-heavers, the sweeps, the policemen, the servant-maids, the vegetable vendors, the cats'-meat men,—in a word every one, without distinction of rank, sex, or age.

"There's a youngster for you!" said the old gentlemen, and chuckled and nodded, till their double chins shook again.

"Fine baby that, nurse!" said the old ladies, and smiled and wagged their heads, till their cap-ribbons danced.

"What a love! Is it a boy?" said the spinsters, and cooed.

"Jolly little customer!" said the young men, and grinned.

"Oh, the duck!" said the young ladies, and beamed.

And then, supposing it was in a coach, all of them together would begin smiling, and chuckling, and cooing, and grinning, and beaming; the old lady shaking her fore-finger, the old gentleman pinching my cheek, the spinster playfully brandishing her parasol, the young men shaking their fists, and the young ladies asking leave to imprint "just one kiss" on my sweet little nose—in a word, in a fit of impatience, I made the resolution to smile no more, and at once carried out said resolution in the immediate neighbourhood of my home, beginning with the Yabsleys, at whose beaming faces I stared, as much as to say,—

"My good folks, oblige me by not presuming *quite* so much on our very slight acquaintance."

With the spinster I was even more pointed; for, having no other means of speaking, with a blighting gaze of my expressive eye I said,—

"Really, ma'am, at your time of life this smiling at a young man is hardly quite proper."

To the old gentleman next door but two,—

“You must excuse my British candour,” said my eye, “but—not to mince matters, my dear sir—I confess I have no wish to fraternize with you.”

To the beaming old lady over the way I put the downright question,—

“Can you, madam, be mistaking me for some one else?” While, as regards the young men and young ladies, the more they smiled the more contemptuous I looked.

“Conceited little beast!” said the young men, wondering how I could resist the smiles of the young ladies; and, at this distance of time, I confess I am myself at a loss to understand how I could have done so, since, with my present views, I can imagine nothing more delightful than to have all the young ladies in all the world beaming at me.

Being, like all autobiographers, I will frankly confess, very anxious concerning the opinion which the public may form of my character from my revelations, I have taken the trouble to ascertain whether I was peculiar as an infant in forming this curious and undeniably churlish resolution.

With this aim in view, I resolved after roughly

jotting down the contents of this chapter to make a minute study of the genus babe, and I accordingly took a ticket from Lewisham to London Bridge. Now, as this act illustrates a rather fine trait in my character, I am tempted to dilate on it. Well aware of the scepticism of the public, especially that portion thereof possessing vulgar minds, from the moment of commencing this work I foresaw the jeer,—

“These revelations are a hoax; nobody need believe them.”

I accordingly fixed on a plan which I herewith recommend to all autobiographers who wish to be believed, namely, I resolved to pen nothing concerning myself for which a parallel may not be found in the lives of others.

“History repeats itself” is a maxim accepted by the public, and whatever does not “repeat” itself is by the public regarded as fiction. With infinite trouble I, bearing this in mind, have sought for every incident recorded in these pages a similar incident in the lives of other infants who are now where I was forty years ago. I shall in many instances be happy to give their names and addresses to the sceptical.

This, I repeat with all humility, I consider rather

a fine trait in an autobiographer, courteous to the public, and—but I will leave it to the public to complete the eulogium.

The result of my studies, undertaken between Lewisham and London Bridge, will be found in the next chapter.

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## II.

## THE STUDENT OF THE INFANT.

I RUSHED off immediately after breakfast to catch the "eight-five" train from Lewisham to London Bridge, and I have no doubt that I am the only man who ever made that trip with a view to studying infants. Taking a rapid view of the carriages, I was disappointed not to see one with a baby in it, in which particular also, I daresay, I was singular. By a lucky circumstance, however, just as I was stepping into my first-class compartment, I beheld on the platform a woman with an unmistakeable bundle in her arms, looking for a guard.

"Want train for London Bridge, my good woman?" I said in my hearty way; "why, this is it." And seeing she had in her hand a third-class ticket, I helped her into a corresponding carriage with great glee, and jumped in after her. A moment after the guard slammed the door, and off we went; but what was my horror to see the woman stow away the "unmistakeable" on the shelf above us.

"Inhuman!" I was about to exclaim. Alas! I



had been too precipitous. The "unmistakeable" tumbled off the ledge, unrolled, and proved, only too plainly, to be but a bundle of shawls.

I could not contain my wrath.

"I thought, ma'am, you had a *baby*," I said, with asperity; and added, talking to myself, as I always do when in rage, "but for that I might have travelled first-class!"

The woman did not appear to see what connection "that," *i.e.* the fact of her not having a baby, could have to do with my travelling whatever class I liked. She resented my furious tone, and remarked that I could have travelled on the "lokeymotion" as far as she was concerned. At this piece of facetiousness a gentleman in a smock laughed immoderately, and I retired into private life behind my *Standard*, resolved to change carriages at St. John's. On my arrival at this station, by another stroke of fortune, behold a pleasant-looking female *with two babies*, this time no mistake, one on each arm.

Casting a look of triumph at the witty proprietor of the shawls, which she did not seem to understand, I bounced out of the carriage.

"Going to London Bridge, my good woman?" I said to the owner of the twins.

"Yes, sir." She smiled. (Decidedly a pleasant-looking person.)

"Here you are, then. There's room in this carriage," and I led the way.

Turning round a moment after to hand her in, there she was, sure enough, but the babies—gone.

"Merciful Providence?" I exclaimed. "*Where are the babies?*" She had left them with her "little gal."

"Mind, Jinny, you take care of 'em," she cried out of the carriage window.

I relapsed into silence and the mechanical perusal for the tenth time of the births, marriages, and deaths.

"New Cross!" Another woman with a baby. With lightning speed I left the train and was at her side. She was a tall, surly-looking person; but she had a baby, and that was all I wanted; no bundle of clothes, but a living baby, and no little girl to take it off either. Still, I resolved to be cautious. I had no wish to travel with this lady minus her infant.

"Going to London Bridge, my good soul?" I said in my cheery style.

"Sich is my intention," was the reply in a lofty tone.

"With your baby, ma'am?"

"Oh, then, ha' done. 'Tain't no bizness o' yourn, my baby," and she turned away indignantly.

Somewhat taken aback, I yet could not resist the opportunity afforded me by the sight of another woman, a tiny creature, hugging a baby almost as big as herself.

"Going to London Bridge, ma'am?" I said in my best manner.

"There's Moikel, maybe he'll tell ye," replied the tiny woman quietly, raising a pair of grey-black eyes with a wonderful flash in them—one flash to me, and one to "Moikel"—and that gentleman advanced, with his fists in the air, and asked me would I take "that," and "that," and "another."

Dragging my somewhat mangled remains away, I found that the train, which, like time, bideth for no man, had gone, and, somewhat disconsolate, sat down and waited for the next, resolved henceforth to interrogate no one, but to take my chance, and a very good chance it turned out to be; for, stepping at hap-hazard into the first third-class compartment, behold in it *three* mothers with *four* babies, the smallest of the trio rejoicing in twins.

Opposite this little mother sat a lady, who handed to her and to each of the other two mothers a tract. I almost expected the babes would smile at this;

but they looked as solemn as owls, especially the twins. Next to me, and opposite the stoutest mother, sat a young girl with work-a-day hands and earnest eyes. To her the elderly lady gave two tracts, severally benamed, "Upwards" and "Downwards." I asked her mildly had she one called "Midway," and if so, if she would give it to me. She replied that she had none with that title.

I then began my study of the genus babe with reference to the matter of smiles.

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## III.

## INFANT PHENOMENA.

No sooner had we fairly started on our way than I began beaming with all my might at the four infants in turn. The twins, who had been sucking their thumbs, took them out of their mouths for a minute, and, giving me a passing scornful glance, anew gazed on vacancy, as solemnly as German philosophers; the middle baby, with eyebrows raised, stared me full in the face; the fourth did the same with a curl of the lip, then, fixing its eye on my newspaper, pretended to be absorbed in perusing the advertisement of Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. A more contemptuous quartette I never saw, and here I will remark that I know of nothing more embarrassing than an unrequited smile. There is something dismal in the sight of a candle going out with its piteous flickerings; I for one always take pity on its agonies and blow it out, and this is precisely the feeling which I have with regard to a smile "on the flicker," if I may so say; nay, I am never aware of having such a smile on my own face,

but I feel so exactly like said candle, that I have an irresistible desire to say to some one, "Do, please, blow me out quickly."

The four infants gazed at me perfectly placidly, as if rather gloating over my embarrassment. The mothers made no attempt to set me at my ease. The girl with the work-a-day hands stared straight before her, and the lady with the tracts studied my profile with imperturbable gravity. I might have opened my *Standard*, but I had undertaken this journey with an aim, and resolved to let nothing daunt me. I therefore tried a chuckle—with the same result. The four infants stared stolidly in front of them; true, something like the glimmering of a smile hovered for a moment on the face of the smaller twin, but meeting with a withering gaze from the elder twin, which said as plain as words, "You don't mean to say you are going to encourage the impertinent familiarity of that individual?" it hastened to compose its features, and sneezed to hide its confusion.

"Perhaps," I said to myself, "they prefer smiles from the softer sex." I noticed that the gaze of the tract-distributor was riveted on the twins.

"Madam," I said, "would you mind—er—smiling at those cherubs? I am making studies of

the genus infant with regard to its attitude to smiles."

As I spoke, I took out my note-book, to show that I was an author by profession, and opened it at an unsullied page.

If I had asked the lady to take a somersault out of the window, to aid me in my studies with regard to the attitude of elderly ladies in the matter of somersaults, she could not have looked more incensed. By a curious piece of luck, however, the girl with the work-a-day hands at this moment gave a distinct laugh.

I turned round,—

"Thank you so much! Will you kindly repeat that, while I study the faces of the infants?"

At this the obliging soul went into fits of merriment, I saying all the time,—

"Thank you so much."

The four babies, however, looked as grimly serious as before.

"*Very* curious, upon my life," I could not help muttering. Suddenly the train stopped. We were at London Bridge.

"Thank you once more," I said to the girl at parting, and slipped a coin into her hand.

"Well, you *are* a larkin' sort," said she.

I looked at her with mingled surprise and *hauteur*.

"Lor', you'll jus' choke me!" she exclaimed, and went down the platform, convulsed with laughter.

To such base suspicions does the student of human nature lay himself open. The result of my studies, meanwhile, is this warning to the public: *Do not smile at strange babies before they smile at you; they resent it.*

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## PART XIII.

*Kissing Aunt Nimkey.*

## KISSING AUNT NIMKEY.

IF in the matter of smiles the infant is a martyr, far more a martyr is he in the matter of kisses. I still shudder to think how narrowly I escaped being made to kiss my great-grand-aunt Nimkey, it being after all a mere chance that her affection for me was nipped, as it was, in the bud.

Aunt Nimkey was rich, elderly, and capricious. Her favourite grand-nephews (she had no nephews living) were my father and Bea's father; and in consequence of a letter received from her announcing her intention of coming on a visit to my parents, it had been arranged that Bea and her father should temporarily take up their abode at our house. In a postscript to this very letter she added that she looked forward with much pleasure to seeing her dear nephews' children (that is Bea and me), of whom she felt fond already. This the affection's

"bud," of which I spoke, and which, as I have also remarked, was doomed to be "nipped."

And now to the description of Aunt Nimkey's visit. On the morning fixed for her arrival, Bea and I, arrayed in all the agonies of full dress, were seated *cap-à-pie* in a perambulator, which was wheeled into the front garden and left there.

Well, for the first five minutes Bea appeared to enjoy the quiet and the view, or perhaps she was only planning mischief, which indeed is more likely. At the expiration of that time she skipped out of the perambulator, and in ten minutes behold her with her rosy face all dirty, and her golden hair all tossed, burrowing among the flower-beds, having fetched to her aid a rake, a spade, and a watering-pot.

A little gardening, varied with a series of somersaults down the garden-walk, the whole ending with the watering-pot being upset, and Bea, after in vain trying to rake and spade up the water, tumbling head foremost into it—this occupied another five minutes. Then after some woeful howling, and wiping her tears in her muddy frock, little Bea knelt down in the grass, and, clasping her two small hands, said piteously, "*God bless Mamma and Papa, and please make the sun dry me. Amen.*"

After this she got up, very solemnly, and stood

full in the sun, sucking her thumb; and what else should she do? At five years of age the flavour of thumb is delicious.

Meanwhile, however delicious it be, just as a gentleman will now and then remove his cigar, so will a lady of five years her thumb.

And so Bea.

Holding it from her at some distance, she was apparently struck by its extreme whiteness as contrasted with the blackness of her four other fingers. For full five minutes she contemplated this phenomenon, meditated thereon, then put the little thumb back between the cherry lips.

All this time the sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and the insects were flying and creeping; and what with the sunshine, the singing, the flying and creeping, and, in the midst of it all, little Bea sucking her thumb and waiting for the sun to dry her, I doubt if that morning earth had a prettier scene.

Suddenly, between Bea and the sun, between Bea and the infant, behold—Miss Nimkey, Bea's and the infant's great-grand-aunt, unknown to either, and—says Miss Nimkey,—

“Are you my great-grand-niece Beatrice?”

Bea removed her thumb and replied briefly, “No.”

"Who are you, then?"

"I am Bea."

Miss Nimkey looked at her with something like horror in her eyes.

"I came to see my niece Beatrice."

This was said in a tone as much as to say,  
"None of your Beas for me!"

Bea looked up at her,—

"Oo won't find Be'trice here."

Then Miss Nimkey turned her eyes to the infant, and Bea, following the direction of her gaze, offered the valuable information,—

"That's *him*."

Having said which, probably thinking she had done her duty as mistress of the ceremonies, she replaced her thumb, plainly an intimation that she meant to say no more.

Miss Nimkey contemplated her, then said in an impressive monotone,—

"Very rude to suck one's thumb when one is spoken to. Fancy me sucking my thumbs!"

To Bea's young imagination this was apparently the work of a moment. The picture which she conjured up did not cause her to smile; a lady's sense of the comical is, in some matters, not so keen at five years of age as it is later. It caused her at first to look perplexed, then to shake her

golden head in disapproval. Miss Nimkey sucking her thumb was an odious picture; odious therefore must be the picture presented by Bea. She forthwith took her thumb from between her lips.

Straightway the phenomenon that had struck her some time ago, struck Miss Nimkey, namely, the extreme whiteness of that thumb as compared with the nine other fingers.

"Little girl," she said, "hold up your hands."

There was no resisting this tone of authority. Up went Bea's two black hands, down went Bea's golden head. The little fingers, like so many notes of exclamation, seemed to cry out,—

"Fie, Bea!"

Lower and lower went the golden head, two big tears dropped at Bea's feet.

What said Jean Paul Richter,—

*"Let not the children weep: the dew is so heavy on the young flowers."*

Lower and lower sank the golden head; patter, patter, went the tears.

Poor little Bea!

"Well, I *am* surprised," said Miss Nimkey, and swept away in the direction of the house.

Alas! I have been pathetic too soon. Is there any accounting, I ask, for the changefulness of a lady aged five? Like a shot Bea's black little

hands went down again, and Bea's golden head went up. Shaking back her curls, she gazed after the tall, gaunt figure stalking down the garden-walk; then—what meant this?—lifted her tiny frock, puckered her rosy lips, and went stalking down the garden-path after Miss Nimkey.

No more than I can explain this metamorphosis in Bea, can I explain what it was that caused Miss Nimkey at this particular moment to turn round; but turn round she did, whilst a cold shiver ran through Bea, and she stood stock-still with her right shoulder slowly rising to her right ear.

In this attitude she remained until Miss Nimkey entered the house.

Then she gave herself that peculiar fling whereby a lady of five seats herself on the ground. It is the work of a moment; the hardness of the fall is not taken into account; a fling, and behold my small cousin seated, head and back one straight line, legs another.

Thus seated in the middle of the garden-walk, Miss Bea, doubtless, like the infant, pondered on the malice of fate.

Suddenly there came a call from the house,—

“Bea!”

“Yes, mother.”

"Come in at once. O—h! what a dirty little gal!"

Alas! the sun had not dried Bea, but, perhaps in consequence of that funny little prayer from the grass-plot, her mother was moved to add,—

"Dress her again, nurse, quick; *and don't let her cry.*"

A few minutes later the infant was looking-on while Bea's face was being washed, "wrong way up," as she said, sneezing. This over, he and the small lady were taken into the best parlour; and said Bea's mother,—

"That is your dear great-grand-aunt, Bea. Go and give her a kiss."

Now Bea was accustomed to obey. Sturdily she marched to do her duty, till she came right in front of Miss Nimkey. Then she paused, and calmly inspected the lady whom she was to embrace.

Miss Nimkey's face, as it had loomed on Bea from on high in the garden, had evidently not struck her as peculiarly prepossessing; able as she now was to give it a closer inspection, it was plain that it struck her as wondrous unlovely.

"Well, my child?" (Speaker, Aunt Nimkey.)

A struggle, and Bea had made up her mind. Scrambling up on Miss Nimkey's knees, she

took the ungainly face between her two dimpled hands,—

"I going to kiss oo; oo won't mind my shutting my eyes?"

Awful was the silence that reigned. No one thought of speaking. No one but the infant thought of doing anything. That humorous young man fell to crowing, then to laughing, then to screaming with delight.

"'Pon my word, a more unlucky coincidence I never heard of," said my father afterwards.

It *was* rather unlucky, inasmuch as Aunt Nimkey, being deficient in a sense of the comical, straight-way left the house.

And not one shilling of her money did she leave to Bea, or the humorous infant.

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## P A R T XIV.

*Daisy-Picking.*

## DAISY-PICKING.

It is somewhat surprising that, while our classic literature boasts of a work entitled "The Complete Angler," it should as yet boast of none entitled "The Complete Daisy-Picker." Now there is a very prevalent opinion that the best daisy-pickers are mothers and aunts. No gentleman, I have often heard it said, ever understood daisy-picking. As my mother used to say,—

"Only to quote the case of Peo and Matty."

Peo has been already mentioned in these pages as the cousin who played the piano; I may as well add that Matty was the young lady with whom he wished to play a lifelong duet.

Now to give these young persons "a chance," my mother one evening proposed a walk; and led the way with my father. It was about seven o'clock; Dame Nature, with exquisite taste, had arranged for the moon to shine, and—Peo kissed Matty.

"A pretty landscape this before us," said my mother to my father.

"I should like to look behind us," said my father to my mother; and, before my mother could prevent it, turned, and in a sweetly guileless voice asked,—

"Can either of you tell us a rhyme for bliss?"

"Law, Mr. Wriggley," said Matty.

Peo, absorbed in contemplation of the stars, looked straight into Heaven's vault; and my father went on his way rejoicing.

"Just men's way that, Sep," said my mother, on telling the story to my aunt. "You might preach to them till you had no breath left."

And so you might.

Yet etiquette prescribes, that where there be lovers there be some one to do propriety. Now here I must praise the good sense of my cousin Teo, whom the reader may remember as the sister of Peo, and also a musician. She, in this dilemma, fixed upon the infant.

When you come to think of it, the infant is the best of daisy-pickers; and, in the event of kisses being interchanged (as sometimes happens between lovers) is simply invaluable.

To describe the case in question.

It was the fashion in our family for Cousins Tish and Teo, together with Cousin Peo, to spend

every second Wednesday at our house; it was also the fashion for the Reverend Teddy Biffin to spend every second Wednesday at our house; it was further the fashion for Cousin Teo to retire into the back-parlour with the infant every second Wednesday evening; and, finally, it was the fashion for the Reverend Teddy Biffin to follow her thither.

After this had gone on for some time, as may be expected, my father (of whom my mother well might say, "Clumsy don't describe him") exclaimed,—

"Where's Teo?"

Answered Teo,—

"Why here with baby, uncle!"

After *this* had gone on for some time, as may be expected, the Reverend Biffin did what even a reverend gentleman does under certain circumstances, to wit, kissed Teo.

Then my father exclaimed,—

"I say, Teo?"

"Well, uncle?" So replying Teo tripped into the front-parlour, hugging me, and adding by way of explanation,—

"He *is* such a duck, one can't help loving him."

On her heels followed the Reverend Biffin, with a mighty tome.

"Fine edition this of the immortal Shakespeare," said the Reverend Biffin.

And think you I betrayed them by a word? Not I. To be sure, I could not speak, but cynical must he be who would attribute my delicate silence to that.

This, as I have said, went on every second Wednesday, I doing propriety and acting as shield in the matter of kisses. Then, one evening, faltered to Teo the Reverend Teddy Biffin,—

*"Will you, darling?"*

Whispered Teo,—

*"Ye—es."*

Then behold the Reverend Teddy Biffin clasped Teo in his arms, and kissed her with such a grandiose indifference to the fact of the front-parlour door being wide open, that my father, louder than ever, cried,—

*"I say, Te—o!"*

Whispered then the Reverend Teddy Biffin,—

*"Shall I tell them, darling?"*

Faltered then the blushing Teo,—

*"I think you'd better, sweetest."*

And he did; and oh, the glee!

"Who'd have thought it?" said my father; adding, "Nice to have an infant-cousin, Teo! He's

the one to keep your secrets. Tell us, how often did you kiss—the baby?”

And Teo blushed, and said,—

“Gracious, uncle, how queer you are!”

And my mother frowned, and said,—

“Goodness, Erbet, how coarse you are!”

And the infant thought, *but did not say*,—

“What a funny set you are!”

And with this account of Teo's romance, and the discreet and gentleman-like part taken therein by the infant, I will conclude these revelations, only adding, as a fitting end to this romantic chapter, that the very last recollection which I have of my infancy is of being taught by honest Bet to say these words, they too, romantically sweet,—

“Mar,” and “Par.”

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THE TRUE STORY  
OF  
CATHERINE PARR.

COMIC PLAY IN ONE ACT  
FOR HOME ACTING.

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HOW THE  
FIRST QUEEN OF ENGLAND  
WAS WOODED AND WON.  
COMIC PLAY IN FOUR ACTS  
FOR HOME ACTING.

1. *What is the purpose of this document?*

2. *What is the main objective of this document?*

3. *What is the scope of this document?*

4. *What is the structure of this document?*

5. *What is the conclusion of this document?*

6. *What is the recommendation of this document?*

7. *What is the action plan of this document?*

8. *What is the timeline of this document?*

9. *What is the budget of this document?*

10. *What is the conclusion of this document?*

## PREFACE TO COMIC PLAYS.

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WITH reference to the following plays I feel that some words are required. As far as I can make out, it has never been satisfactorily explained how Catherine Parr managed old King Hal.

My play on this subject—and I say this with some pride—is based on no chronicle, old or new, but on an hypothesis of my own, which I herewith submit to the approval of the public, trusting that it may not be deemed too wildly improbable.

As for the second play, "How the First Queen of England Was Wooed and Won," I confess frankly that in writing it I aimed at accomplishing what the Germans call a "Culturbild", and if I have indeed had any success in reproducing the diction and manners of bygone times, I shall consider myself fortunate.



In the matter of requisite dress, scenery, mounting, etc., I would point out that when drama was at its height nobody thought of these, and that therefore to be most classical is to be most simple. Nay, as the language of the plays, despite its studied homeliness, is, I have been assured, not free from anachronisms, I would advise the actors to follow in the author's footsteps, and to let no fears of incongruity hamper them.

E. D'ESTERRE-KEELING.

**THE TRUE STORY**  
**OF**  
**CATHERINE PARR;**  
**OR,**  
**HOW A CERTAIN KING HAD HIS WAY**  
**WITH FIVE WIVES, AND**  
**HIS SIXTH WIFE HAD HER WAY WITH HIM.**  
  
**A PLAY**  
**IN ONE ACT FOR SCHOOL AND HOME.**

## THEORY OF THE CASE

THE COURT OF APPEALS IN 1991

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THE COURT OF APPEALS IN 1991

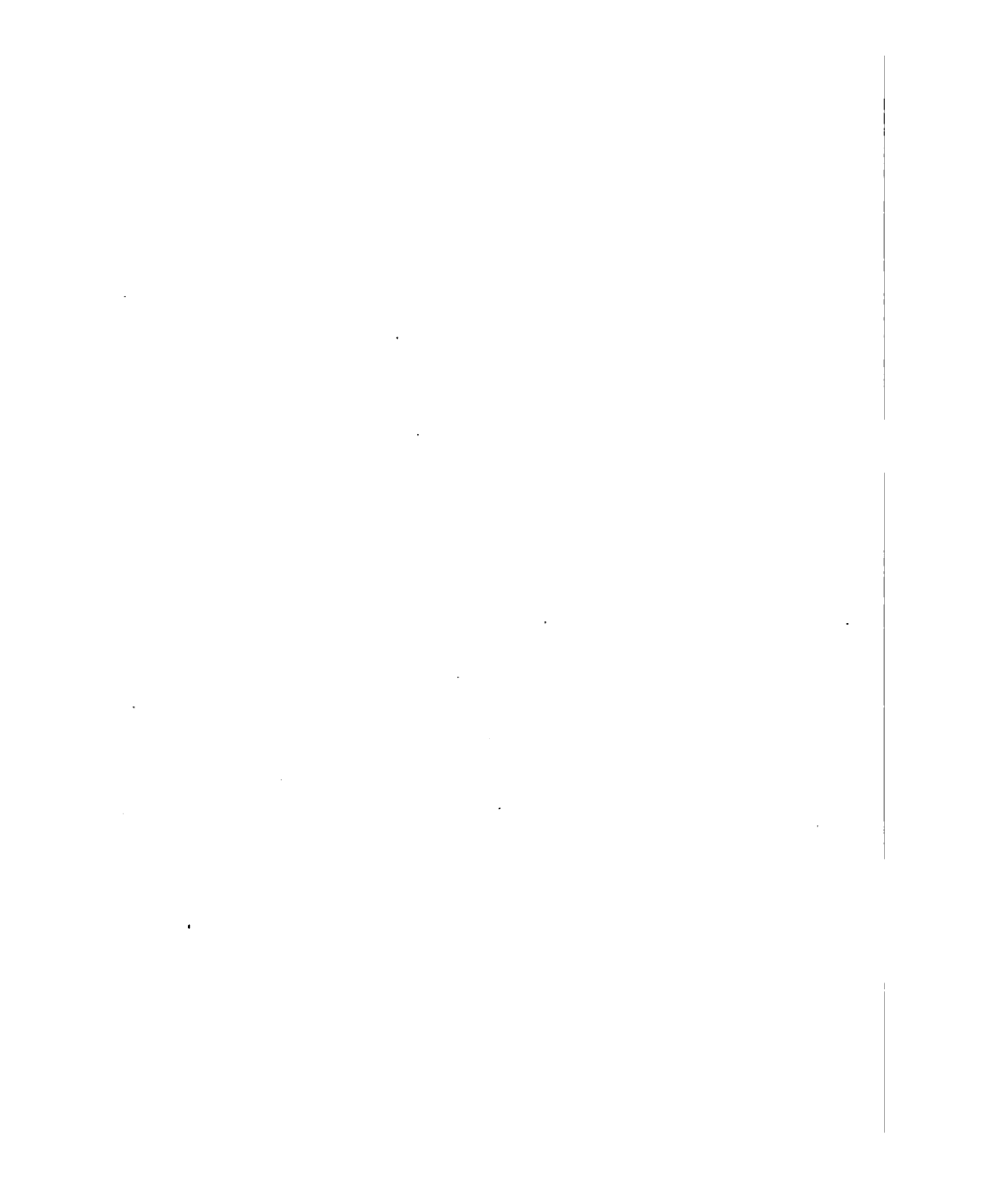
## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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KING HENRY VIII. ( <i>very fat and fair</i> ).	
QUEEN CATHERINE PARR ( <i>tall and passionate</i> ).	
DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK ( <i>small and impetuous</i> ).	} <i>Ladies in Attendance on Her Majesty.</i>
DUCHESS OF NORFOLK ( <i>timid and slight</i> ).	
DUCHESS OF Kent ( <i>vivacious</i> ).	
DUCHESS OF YORK ( <i>fat, dogmatic</i> ).	
DUCHESS OF ESSEX ( <i>haughty</i> ).	
UNSEEN SPEAKER ( <i>deep voice</i> ).	

SCENE.

HENRY'S Court.



THE TRUE STORY  
OF  
CATHERINE PARR.

---

INTRODUCTORY CHORUS.

*To be sung to the air of "The Last Rose of  
Summer."*

HERE's the last wife of Henry  
Now making her moan,  
All her sweet predecessors  
Beheaded and gone.

"Oh, why did I marry!"  
She mutters all day,  
"This wicked King Harry;  
Why said I not nay?"

He's sure to delude her;  
'Tis always her dread

That this wretched old Tudor  
Will chop off her head.

But, oh, she's far smarter  
Than ever was he;  
She'll match the old Tartar,  
As you soon shall see.

## SCENE I.

CATHERINE PARR *on a throne, surrounded by her  
Ladies in attendance.*

CATHERINE.

[*Angrily.*

It's all very well for you who look on,  
But I tell you I won't be sat upon!  
Cross in the morning, and cranky at night,  
Never a thing I do is right!  
Now listen to me,  
If before I count three,  
You haven't thought of some plan to cure him,  
And make him so that I can endure him,  
You'll see how dangerous I can be;  
So—hurry up, Ladies!—One! two! there!

DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK.

[*Steps before her.*

As sure as, Duchess of Suffolk, I hate him,  
With a feather-bed I would suffocate him!

*A Laughing Philosopher, etc.*



CATHERINE.

*[Indignantly.]*Pretty advice, *that!*

Ladies, you've heard her!

*[To the others.]*

I never wished to be guilty of murder!

—If that is your wisdom's sum and essence,

*[Cuttingly.]*

Duchess of Suffolk, pray leave my presence.

DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK.

*[Sobs.]*

Oh, dear, oh! How could I know . . . .

CATHERINE.

*[With a wave of her hand.]*

Duchess of Suffolk, you'll please to—go.

*[Exit SUFFOLK, with her handkerchief  
to her eyes.]*

CATHERINE.

*[To the others.]*

Now listen to me,

If before I count three,

You don't think of some other plan to cure him,  
And make him so that I can endure him,  
You'll see how dangerous I can be;  
So, hurry up, Ladies!—One! two! three!

DUCHESS OF NORFOLK.

*[In a frightened voice.]*

I'd make him stand in a corner.

CATHERINE.

How childish!

I really scorn her.

*[To the others.]*

DUCHESS OF KENT.

*[Impetuously.]*

Why, the way he treats you,  
Madam, and beats you,  
I'm sure it's a *sin* in him,  
I'd stick a pin in him!

DUCHESS OF YORK.

*[Dogmatically.]*

I should diminish his diet,

Shut him up and keep him quiet—

[QUEEN *smiles*.

—Madam, you smile, but you just try it!

When a man gets no dinner,

He's apt to grow thinner,

And his wife can then show him what's in her.

CATHERINE.

Duchess of York, though wise you be,

Your advice will never do for me.

Starve a husband, why, nothing were harder;

Stint him at table, he'll go to the larder.

—But how silent and stupid you others be;

[*To the others.*

Hurry up, Ladies!—One! two! three!

DUCHESS OF ESSEX.

[*Haughtily.*

I should put on my ermine,

And read him a sermon;

I should say:—"Sir King, as you see,

I am Queen, and Queen I will be!

So just leave off your humours;

I declare there are rumours,

That I, Catherine, your wife,

Am plagued out of my life.  
The people all know it,  
So plainly you show it!  
Now, Sir, if you think that you've wed me,  
To tease and behead me,  
Or that I'll be forsaken,  
You're strangely mistaken!  
—Yes, I *will* be imperious!

[*With growing excitement, and  
stamping her foot.*]

I'm perfectly serious,  
I declare such behaviour's my-ster-ious!"

CATHERINE.

[*Coolly.*]

Duchess of Essex, that's all very fine;  
But never will do for this husband of mine.  
Now, I'm getting as cross as cross can be,  
Quick, Ladies!—One! two! three!

[*NORFOLK, KENT, and YORK step  
forward.*]

KENT.

[*Gaily.*]

We've hit on a plan!  
He's just the man,

That the thought of a ghost would send out of his  
wits;  
We'll have him in fits!

CATHERINE. [*Impatiently.*

Duchess, I tell you *that's* no go;  
He doesn't believe in ghosts, I know . . . .

KENT. [*Interrupts her.*

Doesn't he though!  
He's like the veriest child.  
Oh, fancy! the thought makes me wild!

[*Dances about the QUEEN, then suddenly stops and begins counting how many they are; touching them, one by one, without the QUEEN, of course: NORFOLK, YORK, and ESSEX.*

Let's see  
How many we be!  
One—two—three!  
And that's without me,  
Makes four—and there's *she*,  
Our Duchess of Suffolk—upon her knee. . . .

[*As SUFFOLK appears kneeling inside the doorway.*

CATHERINE.

*[Raises her and kisses her on her forehead, in token of forgiveness.]*

Enough, enough,  
My dearest Suff!

SUFFOLK.

*[Kisses the QUEEN'S hand, in token of gratitude.]*

KENT.

*[Whispers aside with the QUEEN, who after a while smiles and nods assent.]*

CATHERINE.

*[Places all the DUCHESES in a row, and addresses them, one after the other.]*

Kate of Arragon you;  
Mind you take care what you do!—

*[To SUFFOLK.]*

You are Anna Boleyn;

*[To NORFOLK.]*

Don't be afraid to be seen!—

Jinny Seymour, you're third, [To KENT.  
Don't make yourself too absurd!—

Anne of Cleves, beware, [To YORK.

You act your rôle with care!—

Catherine Howard, take heart, [To ESSEX.  
Though last, not least your part.

KENT. [Hurriedly.

Madam, the clock is striking one;

[Imitate stroke of clock.

Just the hour it should be done.

We will dress each in a sheet,

And to a corner will retreat,

And when he comes and takes his seat . . . .

—He's gone, you know, to a ball to-night,

Where he'll be late and in a fright

To wake you up with candle-light—

Here he'll come and doff his crown,

And here most probably sit down—

[Bell rings.

Then we'll—but that's the bell, I hear,

Oh, fetch the sheets, do, there's a dear!

[To SUFFOLK.

[Exit SUFFOLK, who returns in a  
moment with the sheets, upon  
which the QUEEN arrays them,

*pinning the sheets so as only  
to leave room for the eyes to  
peer out, a muslin veil being  
previously tied over them to  
hide them. The five DUCHESSES  
form a line and sing*

## THE GHOST CHORUS:

Oh, Henry, now you're in for it,  
The law you wouldn't mind,  
You didn't care a pin for it;  
How could you be so blind?

A martyr tho' you made of her,  
'Tis plain to Cath'rine Parr,  
You're awfully afraid of her,  
Old coward that you are!

A lady so adorable,  
You tried her heart to break,  
Your ways are most deplorable,  
And well you now may quake!

For, oh, indeed, you're in for it,  
The law you wouldn't mind,  
You didn't care a pin for it,  
How could you be so blind?



*[then retire behind a screen, and,  
the QUEEN having left, the  
KING enters noisily, holding  
a bed-room candle-stick, which  
he dashes down on a table.  
He then seats himself on the  
throne and says, crossly:—*

KING.

Yes, I heard her snore,  
As I stood at the door;  
Oh, Catherine Parr,  
What a plague you are!  
Cannot bear a light, forsooth.  
Says it wakes her up! In truth,  
I'd like to wake her up, I would,  
If her voice were only not so good,  
And all the people there to say  
I'm having a little too much of my way.  
—Oh, dear, what a fool was I  
Matrimony again to try;

*[Rises, and walks about the room,  
angrily.*

Just what I might have known, one's wife  
Is always the bother and bane of one's life.

Here's a King can't get to bed,  
Because, forsooth, Queen Catherine said . . .

*[A rustle is heard.]*

—But, stay, what's that? *[Listening.]*

Could it be—a rat?

Again! oh dear, *[Starts.]*

I feel so queer!

There's somebody near! *[Cries.]*

Oh!—I'm shaking with fear! *[Shrieks.]*

*[Drops back on to his throne.]*

UNSEEN SPEAKER.

*[A deep voice is heard.]*

Never more, Harry,  
Will you again marry!

*[KING jumps up, but seats himself again  
at once; putting his hand to his  
forehead.]*

UNSEEN SPEAKER.

*[Deep voice.]*

Kate and Annie make two,  
Jin and Annie make four;  
Kate, and the Katie now queen,

Make five—and you'll never have more!  
—Three Kates and two Annies make five,

*[Deeper still.]*

One Jin makes half a dozen . . . .

KING.

*[Jumps up; in a loud voice.]*

Be you ghost or man alive,  
Be you foe, or be you cousin:—  
I can fetch aid,  
Don't think I'm afraid . . . .

*[Drops back on to his throne.]*

Oh, dear,  
I'm quaking with fear!

UNSEEN SPEAKER

*[As before.]*

Never more, Harry,  
Will you again marry!  
There's Catherine Parr,  
What a silly you are;  
You may beat and ill-treat her,  
Wherever you meet her;  
Be you cross, be you kind,

*She'll* never mind;  
She will forgive you,  
For she will—outlive you!

Yes, whatever you *did*, oh, Sir,

*[Very slowly, and deeper than  
ever.]*

With all the others,  
She'll be your widow, Sir,  
Sure as they'd mothers.

KING. *[Starts forward.]*

Oh, my!  
I shall certainly die!  
Why do you torture me, spirit, oh, why?

SUFFOLK.

*[As Catherine of Arragon, enters,  
dragging a chain after her,  
and wrapped in a sheet, over  
which is placed a crown.]*

Catherine of Arragon,  
I was a paragon;  
How could you force me  
To wed, then divorce me?

KING.

*[Rises; beseechingly.]*

Dearest, why grieve me?  
Leave me! oh, leave me!

SUFFOLK.

Don't think I'll soften;  
You've tried me too often.  
We spirits, we harden:—  
Down, Sir, ask my pardon!

KING.

*[Sinks down before her, and she  
glides away rapidly.]*

On my knee . . . .

*[Looks up, and she is gone.]*

But—what do I see?

UNSEEN SPEAKER.

Spirits vanish into air;  
She who was, no more is there!

*[Noise of chain.]*

NORFOLK.

*[As Anne Boleyn, cries from behind  
the screen.]*

Harry! Harry!

KING.

*[Starts.]*

Another voice! a third!

Oh, most tragic! most absurd!

—Be you flesh, or be you air,

*[In a loud voice.]*

Tell me who you are, and where!

*[NORFOLK steps forth, with a mask  
in her hand; her hand and arm  
being swathed in white muslin,  
or long gloves.]*

KING.

*[Totters back to his throne.]*

Oh, just look at her, look at her, oh!

I'm trembling from top to toe!

NORFOLK.

Flesh I was, but now am air, Sir;

Touch my spirit, if you dare, Sir!  
Here I am, whom once you wedded;  
Then accused and had beheaded.  
Oh, your customs are most kingly;  
—Only wish that I'd lived singly!  
Now that I have come so far, Sir,  
For the sake of Catherine Parr, Sir;  
Oft she spoke; you would not hear her,  
Come a little nearer—nearer.

[KING comes towards her on his  
knees, trembling.

Once you loved me; no one dearer,  
Don't be frightened; nearer—nearer!

[Gruesomely.

[She goes to meet him, and raises  
her arm as if to strike him, at  
which he falls down on his face,  
whereupon she vanishes.

KENT.

[As Seymour.

Oh, *that's* where you're lying,  
A-sobbing and sighing,  
A-moaning and crying.

KING.

Oh! Oh! Oh!

KENT.

[*Imitating him.*

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Wretched man of woe!—

So you cried,

When I died:—

"Oh, my Jinny, my *sweetest*, my bride!"[*Imitating him.*

And scarce was I dead,

And those fickle tears shed;

When—*again you were wed!*[*Stepping up close to him, slowly  
and loudly.*

KING.

[*Puts his handkerchief to his eyes.*

KENT.

Oh, I know what your fears are,

And know what your—tears are!

[*Snatches away his handkerchief  
and departs, imitating his sobs:*  
"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

YORK.

[*As Anne of Cleves.*

Stay, no more of that, Sir;

[*KING still sobs.**A Laughing Philosopher, etc.*



I tell you quite flat, Sir,  
Your tears do not move me a bit!  
Get up, you old Nero, there, sit!

[KING *sits down on the throne. She  
stands before him; gruesomely.*

Guess what I've brought you—something nice!  
Once I'll let you guess, and twice;  
Twice I'll let you guess, and thrice.

KING. [Shivering.

You are so cold; it must be ice.

YORK.

No, no; 'tis something of great price.

KING. [Whispers.

You are so quiet; is it mice?

YORK. [Coldly.

Mice are not priceless; neither nice.

KING.

You are so stern; 'tis good advice.

YORK.

Right, King; that comes of guessing thrice!

*[She strides the length of the room;  
then, again before him:—*

Lest you marry any more, Sir,  
I have good advice in store, Sir:—  
Love your lady first, then wed her,  
Don't divorce, much less behead her,  
Lest you come one day to dread her,  
*When her Spirit comes to stead her.*

*[Exit. The KING leans back in his  
throne with closed eyes, and does  
not become aware of ESSEX'S  
presence as Catherine Howard  
till she has stood some time be-  
fore him. He trembles.*

ESSEX.

*[As Howard, also with a mask.*

Yes, quake, you old coward;  
I'm Catherine Howard!

KING.

*[Rises, and tries to seem courageous.*

Excuse me; but, Kate dear,  
It's really too late, dear . . .

ESSEX.

[*Angrily.*

It wouldn't be too *late if*,  
You wretched old caitiff,  
Hadh't once had me *led off*  
To chop my poor head off.  
Don't call *me* your "dear," Sir,  
For that I'm not here, Sir.—  
—Henry, King, kneel at my feet,

[*Slowly and solemnly.*

And what my spirit saith, repeat.

[KING *kneels and repeats after her in  
a terrified voice.*

If ever again I tease a wife—

(KING) "tease a wife"—

Hurt or harm, or rob her of life—

(KING) "rob her of life"—

As I 'gainst five have dared to sin—

(KING) "dared to sin"—

Two Kates, two Annies, and one Jin—

(KING) "one Jin"—

May I be fetched by spirits five—

(KING) "spirits five"—

And borne away to the grave alive—

(KING) "to the grave alive"—

As I to spirits five this night—

(KING) "five this night"—

My royal word do kneeling plight—

(KING) “kneeling plight”—

*Their* ghosts, who met such cruel fates—

(KING) “such cruel fates”—

One Jin, two Annies and two Kates—

(KING) “two Annies and two Kates”—

[KING *remains kneeling.*

So, mind what I've said, Sir!

And now go to bed, Sir!

[KING *still kneels.*

What, do you not hear me?

[KING *starts.*

KING.

Oh, yes, ma'am;

Please, don't come so near me.

[*Motions her off and leaves the room,  
quaking, on tiptoe.*

ESSEX.

[*Throws off her sheet. All the other  
LADIES re-appear.*

Did you see how he tript, oh?

Like this: all on tiptoe.

[*Imitating him, gaily.*

YORK. [Grandiloquently.

We've done a work *to-day*, my friends,

Well worth a woman's life:—

A king may have his way, my friends,

But then,—*a wife's a wife!*

I'm not myself for *tricks*, you know;

Kings must have wives, say I;

But, after all; well, six, you know,

Was rather much to try.

KENT. [Excitedly.

A king, too, of his *age*, my dears,

It really couldn't be!

Oh, we shall make a page, my dears,

In English *historee*.

NORFOLK.

[Turns to her; sarcastically.

What, Duchess, you *believe*—yourself—

That you will figure then;

Oh, pray you, don't deceive yourself:—

Historians *are* such men.

[Shutting her eyes, and nodding her head.

## SUFFOLK.

*[In an injured tone.]*

Yes, when it comes to *History*,

    'Twill be alluded to,

As—really quite a mystery;

*Whatever did she do?*

Though they believe in *most* storees,

    Historians nowadays

Do *not* approve of *ghost*-storees;

    So we shall get no praise.

*[All join hands and bow.]*

## CLOSING SONG.

Now, while you're here before us,

Just let us sing in chorus,

What we have still to say!

    Something, oh, don't you know,

    Comme il faut,

    Which we have still to say.

We should say something pretty,

It's really such a pity,

We do not know the way!

    Something, oh, don't you know,

Comme il faut,  
If we but knew the way.

But we are all so shrinking,  
So shy, and keep on thinking,  
Oh, did you think our play,  
Bright or slow, or so so,  
Oh, dear, oh,  
How *did* you like our play?

[CURTAIN FALLS.]

HOW THE  
FIRST QUEEN OF ENGLAND  
WAS WOODED AND WON;  
OR,  
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR'S FIRST  
CONQUEST.

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS FOR SCHOOL  
AND HOME.





The story of William the Conqueror's wooing is pretty well known. "The grandson of a tanner" on his mother's side, he was indeed scornfully rejected by Matilda of Flanders, that lady having lost her heart to a knight of the name of Snow. Only, after the infuriated Norman's "pelting her with mud" in the town of Lille did she in terror consent to become his wife, a step which she had never cause to regret; history vouching for the fact that, like the king and queen of a fairy-tale, her liege-lord and she, as King and Queen of England, "lived happily ever after."



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

---

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR (*very fat and ruddy*).  
MATILDA OF FLANDERS (*sentimental*).  
KNIGHT OF SNOW (*lean and pale*).  
LORD DE SNOBBE, *Grantee at Matilda's Court* (*pompous*).  
LORD DE SOUE, *Matilda's Minister of Finance* (*thin*).  
LADY WINNISLOW, *Friend to Matilda* (*poetical*).  
MESSENGER *from Flanders to William* (*loud*).  
EIGHT STALLOWNERS (*women*).  
TWO SCAVENGER BOYS (*in smocks*).  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN *of Matilda's suite*.  
TWO PAGES *to hold up Matilda's train*.  
PASSERS-BY *at Market-place of Lille*.  
JESTER.

## SCENE.

ACT I.—*Court at Flanders*.  
ACT II.—*Court at Normandy*.  
ACT III.—*Court at Flanders*.  
ACT IV.—*Market-place at Lille*.



HOW THE FIRST QUEEN OF ENGLAND  
WAS WOODED AND WON.

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INTRODUCTORY SONG.

Now listen how a lady,  
Was treated by a king,  
O tempora, O mores;  
We're horribly afraid he  
Didn't do the proper thing,  
O tempora, O mores.  
He pelted her with snow-balls  
In the market place of Lille.  
Tralalalala,  
O tempo-tempora,  
I'd like to know how you would feel  
In such an *embarras*.

His ways were certes those of  
A peasant more than peer,  
O tempora, O mores;

They quite lack'd the repose of  
The caste of Vere de Vere,  
O tempora, O mores.  
To snow-ball a fair lady  
Right in the market place.  
Tralalalala,  
O tempo-tempora,  
Just fancy to yourself her face,  
In such an *embarras*.

## ACT I.

## SCENE I.

## MATILDA'S Apartment.

MATILDA. KNIGHT OF SNOW.

[KNIGHT OF SNOW, *leaning against a window, lost in thought.*  
*Enter MATILDA, who flings herself into a chair, looks round her, and then stamps her foot, impatiently.*

MATILDA.

WELL, did you ever! He does not hear me,  
Never looks round, and he so near me! [Coughs.  
Nay, by my shoe, I'm half afraid he  
Is in love with some other lady.

[Sneezes; then drops her handkerchief, at which the KNIGHT looks round, still dreaming.  
MATILDA sharply points to the handkerchief.



My kerchief, pray; I've a cold in my head, Sir;  
—Didn't you hear what I said, Sir?

KNIGHT.

*[Darts forward, and picks up the handkerchief.]*

Alas, how careless I have been;  
Nay, by my troth, had I but seen . . . .

MATILDA.

*[Snatches the kerchief from him.]*

Oh, never mind; we all are blind,  
When we to see are disinclined!—

*[KNIGHT turns away.]*

Stay, Brihtric, stay! *[Softening.]*  
And now you're seated near me, say:  
When on yon open window-sill you leant,  
Your eyes upon the distance bent,  
Where were your thoughts?—I fain would know,  
Most melancholy Knight of Snow.

KNIGHT.

*[Sentimentally.]*

My thoughts, fair dame, ah, dare I say

My thoughts were trav'ling far away,  
To fields where once I used to roam,  
Within my happy English home?

MATILDA.

*[Dryly.*

All very fine, fair Knight of Snow;  
But happy fields alone, you know,  
Could hardly cause that face of woe.

KNIGHT.

I have a father, lovely dame,  
A parent good and knight of fame,  
Did I not miss him 'twere a shame.

MATILDA.

*[Examining her kerchief.*

All very true, fair Knight of Snow,  
But he is strong, as well you know;  
In truth I see no cause for woe.

KNIGHT.

Alas, I have a mother, too;

If you her gentle heart but knew,  
You would not call my grief undue.

MATILDA.

[*Petulantly.*

Nay, that I *should*, fair Knight of Snow,  
For she is well, as well you know;  
Then why that constant look of woe?

KNIGHT.

You've pierced my secret, Lady fair,  
I love a maid beyond compare;  
For her alone that look I wear.

MATILDA.

[*Starts from her chair, the KNIGHT  
following her example.*

You love a maiden! Be it so!  
This instant from my presence go!  
Most wicked, cruel Knight of Snow!

KNIGHT.

[*Kneels; his hand to his heart.*

Nay, lovely Countess, see me kneel,  
If you but knew how much I feel . . .

MATILDA.

[*Angrily.*

You?—Get away from me, you eel!  
How *could* you steal my heart, Sir?

[*Drawing herself up.*

This instant go—depart, Sir!

[*KNIGHT walks away, his arms  
limp, his head bent. MATILDA  
looks after him, then faces  
the audience, tragically.*

There's a knight, who lived on salad,  
Growing every day more pallid,  
Till in him you saw made real  
Every lady's beau ideal,—  
And to think he loves another,  
Oh, I shall smother, I shall smother!

[*Sobs loudly, with her face buried in  
her handkerchief.*

CHORUS.

Oh, lady, cease these tears to shed,  
They make the nose so red;  
It really is a great mistake,  
When people do to weeping take.

Howe'er it may the nerves compose,  
It lends that colour to the nose,  
Which all æsthetic souls abhor;  
Then, oh, sweet lady, weep no more.

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ACT II.

SCENE I.

*Court at Normandy.*

WILLIAM and his JESTER; afterwards a  
MESSENGER from Flanders.

WILLIAM.

*[Walking up and down the room.]*

I LOVE my love with an M, because she is mourn-  
ful;

I love my love with an A, because she is scorn-  
ful . . . .

JESTER.

*[Who is seated on a high chair, his  
legs perched on the topmost rung;  
pertly.]*

A! Scornful begins with an S, Sir!

WILLIAM. [*Angrily.*

Well, scornful is she none the less, Sir!

JESTER. [*As before.*

"Always scornful," then say,  
To keep to the A.

WILLIAM.

—I love my love with an M, because she is mourn-  
ful, [*Begins anew.*

I love my love with an A, there—bother the  
metre!

Don't you see it's a foot too long, is "always scorn-  
ful,"

Though scornful she always is, however I treat  
her!

Ah, Tilly, sweet Tilly,  
[*Throws himself into a chair.*

You've made me so silly!

JESTER.

Well, talk of sweet Williams, now here's a sweet  
Willy!

WILLIAM.

*[After a pause, throwing the JESTER a penny.]*

Ho, there, a penny  
For your thoughts, if you've any!

JESTER.

*[Jumps down to fetch the coin, then leaps on to his chair, and sits as before.]*

Aye, and a many!—  
—I was wondering if they're fond of ganders  
At the court of Flanders.

WILLIAM.

*[Seizes hold of him, angrily.]*

Were you so?  
Don't you know . . .

JESTER.

*[Wriggles.]*

I'll be good, Sir, I'll be good, Sir; let me go!

*[Enter MESSENGER from Flanders.]*

*JESTER vanishes behind a chair.*



WILLIAM. [*Courteously.*

A messenger from Flanders, as I see,  
Welcome, you bringer of good news to me!

[*Steps towards him.*

MESSENGER.

[*Bows and steps back.*

WILLIAM.

[*Again advances.*

Nay, why this ceremony? Nearer—nearer!

MESSENGER.

[*Somewhat confused; bows and  
steps back again.*

Thank you, my liege, the passage here is—  
clearer.

WILLIAM.

[*Flings himself into his chair.*

MESSENGER then draws himself up and in a loud voice declares:—

## MESSENGER.

My message from the Flemish Court,

Is plain and short:—

Our Countess says that he who fain would win  
her

Must be some other than the grandson of a skin-  
ner;

For the rest, she sends you *this*, and hopes the  
shock may make you—thinner.

[*Exit quickly. During this speech*  
WILLIAM has at the second line  
stamped his foot, at the third  
risen, and scarcely heard the  
speaker out, before he rushes  
upon him. The latter escapes,  
however, and WILLIAM picks up  
the scroll of coarse leather which  
had been thrown down at the  
word "This."

## SCENE II.

WILLIAM *alone; afterwards* JESTER.

WILLIAM.

*[Alone; walks up and down the room, the leather in his left hand, the forefinger of his right hand placed against his left nostril; head bent.*

Now, it may seem very curious,  
But the part that makes me furious  
In my Lady fair's reply,  
Is—I repeat it with a sigh—  
To my sorrow and confusion,  
Her allusion  
To my figure;—  
Hark, do I hear a snigger?

*[JESTER peeps forth, tittering, from behind the chair.*

There is something tragi-comic  
In one who likes the gastronomic  
Growing stout;

There is something very prosy  
In a lover's being rosy,  
Not a doubt.—  
But, Lady, putting this and that together  
My chances of success are good, I know;  
Oh, you ere long shall learn the dread of leather,  
And, by my word, satiety of Snow.—

*[Seats himself and contemplates the leather.]*

Well, I never!

JESTER.

*[From behind his chair.]*

Did you ever!

WILLIAM.

*[Starts, but sees nothing.]*

Oh, my pancer,  
Here's an answer!—  
Did you ever!

*[Holds the leather at arm's length.]*

JESTER.

*[Behind his chair.]*

No, I never!

WILLIAM.

*[Looks round; JESTER steps forth]*

*and stands before him, his  
hands in his pockets.*

Come, what shall I *do* with it?

JESTER.

*[Who has seated himself on a low  
stool, with his elbows on his  
knees.*

Make her a shoe with it!

WILLIAM.

*[Flings the leather from him,*

*I make a slipper!*

Better far whip her!

And,—between me and you,—Sir,

That's just what I'll do, Sir.

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## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

MATILDA, LADY WINNISLOW; *afterwards* WILLIAM.

MATILDA.

*[Rushes in, her arms wrapped up in bandages; pieces of sticking plaster on her forehead, the tip of her nose, and her chin. Flings herself on the sofa, writhing.]*

Oh, my arms! oh, my back! oh, my shoulder!  
Where's my mother? oh, dear, have you told  
her?

Stay, he's coming, I hear him;  
You know how I fear him!  
Oh, don't leave me near him!

*[Jumps behind the sofa.]*

WILLIAM.

[*With a cat-o'-nine-tails made of  
MATILDA'S leather.*

Where's Matilda?

[*To* LADY WINNISLOW.

LADY WINNISLOW. [*Tragically.*

You have killed-a!

WILLIAM.

What, you tremble!

Don't dissemble!—

[*Bending over her.*

Had I made a slipper,

She would wear it;

I have come to whip her,

Let her bear it.

[*Looking over the sofa—to*

MATILDA.

Lady Fair,

Get out there,

Or else I'll drag you by the hair!—

Oh, you guy,

[*MATILDA starts up; their eyes  
meet.*

Get away!

By-and-bye,

I shall have more to say!

[*Turns his back to her, and sits*

*down on the sofa. MATILDA looks at him, from behind the sofa, first one side, then the other; and finally, laying a hand on each of his shoulders, says, archly:—*

MATILDA.

Now, strange as it may strike you,  
Burly Norman Knight,—  
I almost think I like you,  
And you served me right.

WILLIAM.

[*To LADY WINNISLOW, who sits at his side; pulling her sleeve.*

That's the way to win 'em,  
Did you, Lady, see?  
Oh, your Flemish women,  
They're the sort for me!

Teach 'em but to dread you,  
And they'll like you too. . . .

MATILDA.

[*Running out from behind the sofa; with a saucy little curtsy.*

Like, but never wed you;

*A Laughing Philosopher, etc.*



Norman Prince, adieu!

*[Hastens to the door and opens it;  
then, holding the handle outside.*

You've cured my scorn of leather,  
But do not look so gay;  
That wasn't altogether  
The reason of my Nay.

You smile! what, don't you know, Sir,  
That you are number two;  
That I love the Knight of Snow, Sir,  
Better far than you.

Adieu!!

*[Exit.*

WILLIAM.

*[To LADY WINNISLOW, as he rises,  
and flings away his whip.*

Now, by my cat-o'-nine-tails,  
Fair Lady Winnislow,  
But these be very fine tales  
About the Knight of Snow.

LADY WINNISLOW.

*[In a die-away manner puts her  
hand to her heart, and shakes her  
head,*

WILLIAM.

[*Angrily.*

Oh, you needn't shake your head, Ma'am;  
'Twill be as I have said, Ma'am!  
You yourself shall tell me whether  
I am right or wrong;  
Having learnt the dread of leather,  
She shall fly from Snow ere long.

[*Takes up his whip, which he slings  
over his shoulder; then leaves  
the room with a deep bow to the  
LADY.*

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## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Lille, the walls of which at either side of the chief entrance have tables placed along them, representing stalls, bed-sheets or broad strips of white paper being laid under them to represent snow, while finely cut rags or paper is strewn about the centre in imitation of fresh fallen snow.*

*Behind the stalls the owners (women) cry to the passers-by as follows, first one after the other, then all together, each time laying especial stress on the vowel I preceding "Sirs."*

BOOK STALLOWNER.

*[Holding up an open book.*

POETRY and prose at every price, Sirs!

GROCERY STALLOWNER.

*[Holding up a sugar loaf.*

Finest sugar, pepper, salt, and spice, Sirs!

CLOTH STALLOWNER.

*[Holding up a showy material.*

Mine's the stuff to shield you from the ice, Sirs!

LINEN STALLOWNER.

*[Flourishing a night-cap.*

Come to me; I'll serve you in a trice, Sirs!

BOOT STALLOWNER.

*[Holding up a boot.*

Everything that's elegant and nice, Sirs!

HABERDASHERY STALLOWNER.

*[Holding up a handful of buttons  
which she lets fall; laughter.*

Buttons, cottons, lace, and hooks and eyes, Sirs!

PAPER STALLOWNER.

*[Flourishing a Christmas card.*

You have but to see my wares to buy, Sirs!

BREAD STALLOWNER.

*[Rushes out, flourishing a loaf.]*

The only one essential here am I, Sirs!

*[All together, as above, without the "Sirs," the criers having only reached so far, when MATILDA enters and her train-bearers call "Sch!" in a loud voice.]*

MATILDA.

*[Looks at the fresh fallen snow, then at the sky (alias, ceiling), and finally stretches out her hand to feel if it is still snowing, exclaiming affectedly:—]*

What, snows it still, or why upon my road

Looks it as if it snowed?

Where are the little scavengers, I pray,

That ought to sweep my way?

*[Dialogue between two small boys, in smocks, with very big brushes.]*

FIRST LITTLE BOY.

*You go!*

SECOND LITTLE BOY.

No, you!

*[One of the BY-STANDERS pushes SMALLER BOY forward, who stands before the COUNTESS with his brush in one hand and cap in the other.]*

MATILDA.

*[Severely.]*

May I inquire, where were *you* then perching?

Oblige me, Lord de Snobbe, and give this urchin

*[To a Gentleman in attendance; loftily.]*

A very thorough birching.

LORD DE SNOBBE.

*[Exit, with SMALL BOY, holding the tip of his ear between his first finger and thumb, the other fingers being gracefully extended.]*

JESTER.

*[To FIRST LITTLE BOY.]*

Tiddle-um-do-de!

## FIRST LITTLE BOY.

[To JESTER

Glad it isn't me!

[*The PAGES holding up MATILDA'S train behind, raise it very high while the LADIES at each side of her raise the parts nearest them, so that it is held up all round. She is walking along in this manner with a haughty expression, when WILLIAM OF NORMANDY steps forth and throws a large snow-ball at her, then in quick succession a volley of others.*

KNIGHT of SNOW.

[*Rushes forward.*

Sir; I cannot stand that any Lady be ill-treated!

WILLIAM.

[*Throws him into a sitting posture.*

Well, if you cannot stand it, pray be seated!

KNIGHT.

*[Rises; rubbing himself.]*

Oh! Oh!

WILLIAM.

*[To MATILDA.]*

Well, Tilly, have you had enough of snow?

KNIGHT.

*[In an agonized tone.]*

I'm sure, *I've* had enough of Tilly—oh!

MATILDA.

*[Turning to him; angrily.]*

What! you're a pretty knight, Sir!

*[Waving her hand.]*

At once out of my sight, Sir!

*[KNIGHT still writhes and makes faces.]*

*Hurt?* are you? serves you right, Sir!

KNIGHT.

*[Hobbling away.]*

Oh, to think of me defeated,



And seated, actually *seated*,  
In the face of these plebeians here! oh, dear,  
oh!  
Who will speak of me henceforward as a hero?

WILLIAM.                      [*To MATILDA.*

Have you had enough of SNOW?  
Answer—"yes" or "no"!

Oh, Willy.                      MATILDA.                      [*Smiles.*

Sweetest Tilly!                      WILLIAM.                      [*Also smiles.*

[*They embrace; then MATILDA looks round and addresses a STALL-OWNER.*

MATILDA.  
As you see, the Duke of Normandy has done me.

STALLOWNER.  
Yes'm.

MATILDA.

And has won me.

STALLOWNERS.      [*All together.*

Bless him!

MATILDA.

And now you've seen the way of it,  
Go home and make a day of it!  
Stay, where is my financial minister?

*[A little thin gentleman in a tall  
hat presents himself, holding  
his hat in one hand and a large  
money bag behind his back in the  
other. MATILDA takes the bag  
from him; gaily.]*

There, Lord de Soue, you needn't look so sinister!  
Away with parsimony now, I say,  
And "pass-the-money" be the word to-day!

STALLOWNER.

Oh, the pretty,  
Ain't she witty.

LORD DE SOUE.

*[Shakes his head; sadly.]*

Pity, pity!

All the money thrown about the city!

*[Meanwhile MATILDA gives the money bag to a STALLOWNER and motions her to share it with the others. Then she looks round.]*

MATILDA.

Where's the urchin

Got the birching?

*[Exit LORD DE SNOBBE, who returns with the culprit, as before.]*

MATILDA.

Come, you little, dirty boy!

In consideration of my joy,

I give you this—and this—

*[Throwing down pennies.]*

And a kiss!

*[Kisses her forefinger and then touches his forehead.]*

LITTLE BOY.

*[Picks up the money and joins the  
other BOY and JESTER.*

"Tiddle-um-do-de!!

*[To JESTER.*

"Glad it's me!!"

*[To other BOY.*

WILLIAM.

*[To LADY WINNISLOW, pulling her  
sleeve.*

That's the way to win 'em,

Now you, Lady, see!

Oh, your Flemish women

They're the sort for me!

*[Tucks MATILDA under his arm, and  
quits the stage amid shouts of  
"Hurrah!"]*

CLOSING SONG.

You now have heard a true storee  
Of love in times benighted,  
And tho' it be no new storee,  
We hope you were delighted,  
We hope you were delighted.

Our notion of a holiday  
Is merriment and laughter,  
A bonâ fide jolly day,  
With fun before and after.  
Please, say, we've rous'd your laughter.

[CURTAIN FALLS.]

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